



## Right to social inclusion and equality

# National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023)

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## National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023)

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

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## National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023)

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**Abstract**

The National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities determines the measures that will be taken to promote the implementation of the Convention in different administrative branches during the second action plan period 2020-2023.

The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, VANE, was responsible for drawing up the Action Plan. The Advisory Board includes representatives of disability organisations, labour market organisations and the ministries with key significance to the rights of persons with disabilities. Disability organisations and other stakeholders have been consulted during the process of drawing up the Action Plan to obtain information about the matters that according to the Convention should primarily be promoted in the Action Plan.

The Action Plan comprises 110 measures, and the ministries have committed themselves to their implementation. A responsible party or parties have been indicated for each measure. The implementation of the measures will be monitored during the action plan period and assessed at the end of the period.

The Action Plan emphasises the importance of social inclusion of persons with disabilities in the changing operating environment and the importance of accessibility as a precondition for implementing the other rights. One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to increase awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to mainstream these rights in different administrative branches and more widely in society.

**Keywords** equality, inclusion, accessibility, availability, human rights, people with disabilities

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## Oikeus osallisuuteen ja yhdenvertaisuuteen

## YK:n vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien yleissopimuksen kansallinen toimintaohjelma 2020–2023

## Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön julkaisuja 2021:22

**Julkaisija** Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö**Yhteistötekijä** Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö**Kieli** Englanti**Sivumäärä**

158

**Tiivistelmä**

YK:n vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien yleissopimuksen kansallisessa toimintaohjelmassa on määritelty ne toimenpiteet, joilla vammaisyleissopimuksen täytäntöönpanoa edistetään eri hallinnonaloilla toisella toimintaohjelmakaudella 2020–2023.

Toimintaohjelman tekemisestä on vastannut vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien neuvottelukunta VANE, jossa ovat edustettuina vammaisjärjestöt, työmarkkinajärjestöt ja vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien kannalta keskeiset ministeriöt. Toimintaohjelmaa laadittaessa on kuultu vammaisjärjestöjä ja muita sidosryhmiä ja näin saatu heiltä tietoa niistä YK:n vammaisyleissopimuksen mukaisista asioista, joita toimintaohjelmassa tulisi ensisijaisesti edistää.

Toimintaohjelma koostuu 110 toimenpiteestä, joiden toteuttamiseen eri ministeriöt ovat sitoutuneet. Jokaisen toimenpiteen kohdalla on merkitty vastuutaho tai vastuutahot. Toimenpiteiden toteutumista seurataan toimintaohjelmakauden aikana ja arvioidaan toimintaohjelmakauden päättyessä.

Toimintaohjelmassa korostuvat vammaisten ihmisten osallisuuden merkitys muuttuvassa toimintaympäristössä sekä esteettömyyden ja saavutettavuuden merkitys muiden oikeuksien toteutumisen edellytyksenä. Yhtenä toimintaohjelman tärkeänä tavoitteena on lisätä tietoisuutta vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksista ja vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien valtavirtaistamisesta eri hallinnonaloilla ja laajemmin yhteiskunnassa.

**Asiasanat** yhdenvertaisuus, osallisuus, esteettömyys, saavutettavuus, ihmisoikeudet, vammaiset**ISBN PDF** 978-952-00-5422-9**ISSN PDF**

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## Rätt till delaktighet och likabehandling

### Nationellt handlingsprogram för FN:s konvention om rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning (2020–2023)

#### Social- och hälsovårdsministeriets publikationer 2021:22

<b>Utgivare</b>	Social- och hälsovårdsministeriet		
<b>Organisation</b>	Social- och hälsovårdsministeriet		
<b>Språk</b>	Engelska	<b>Sidantal</b>	158

#### Referat

I det nationella handlingsprogrammet för FN:s konvention om rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning anges de åtgärder genom vilka genomförandet av konventionen ska främjas inom olika förvaltningsområden under den andra programperioden 2020–2023.

Handlingsprogrammet har utarbetats av delegationen för rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning Vane, som består av representanter från funktionshinderorganisationer, arbetsmarknadsorganisationer och de centrala ministerierna med avseende på rättigheterna hos personer med funktionsnedsättning. Vid beredningen av handlingsprogrammet har man hört handikapporganisationer och andra intressegrupper för att få information om de åtgärder i FN:s konvention som ska prioriteras i handlingsprogrammet.

Handlingsprogrammet består av 110 åtgärder som olika ministerier har förbundit sig att genomföra. För varje åtgärd finns det en eller flera ansvariga instanser. Genomförandet av åtgärderna följs upp under programperioden och utvärderas efter programperiodens slut.

I handlingsprogrammet accentueras betydelsen av att personer med funktionsnedsättning är delaktiga i vår föränderliga omvärld och av att tillgängligheten är en förutsättning för tillgodoseendet av övriga rättigheter. Viktiga mål i handlingsprogrammet är att personer med funktionsnedsättning ska bli mer medvetna om sina rättigheter och att dessa rättigheter ska integreras inom olika förvaltningsområden och i samhället i stort.

**Nyckelord** likabehandling, delaktighet, tillgänglighet, mänskliga rättigheter, personer med funktionsnedsättning

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## FOR THE READER

Dear reader,

Everyone is entitled to fundamental and human rights. However, the rights of certain groups of people are not always realised unless particular attention is paid to them and special measures are taken to ensure these rights. Persons with disabilities are one of these groups. This is why the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was needed, and why special national measures to safeguard the rights guaranteed in the Convention are also necessary.

When ratifying the Convention in 2016, Finland committed to reaffirming the full enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties for persons with disabilities as well as to promoting their realisation. Consequently, Finland prepares a national Action Plan on the implementation of the Convention for each term of government. The present document is Finland's second Action Plan on the Convention.

The Action Plan consists of thirteen content areas, some of which are cross-cutting and important in principle, while others concern specific administrative branches. These content areas also contain descriptions of the current state, which cover legislative structures, pending matters and issues that need to be resolved alike. This lays the foundation for the objectives and actual measures of the Action Plan, without forgetting the parties responsible for the measures and the monitoring of the Action Plan.

The contents of the Action Plan mostly follow the structure of the first Action Plan on the UNCRPD, with one exception: safety has been identified as a separate content area in the current document. It was drafted in the midst of measures taken to restrict the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, and persons with disabilities are one of the groups whose safety must be specially addressed in emergency conditions, without forgetting respect for their human rights.

The preparation of the Action Plan was guided by two principles of disability policy: mainstreaming and inclusion. Each administrative branch has gone through their measures related to the rights of persons with disabilities for the term of government and are committed to them. The preparation process included dialogues with both disability organisations and other stakeholders. Persons with disabilities also had a strong representation in the background group that supported the preparation of the Action Plan and were present at all ministerial negotiations.

While the Action Plan is one step towards a more equal society, we are not there yet. We cannot settle with a situation where persons with disabilities have a lower employment rate, level of education and standard of living than the rest of the population. A great deal of work also remains to be done in the area of accessibility. Every person with a disability should have a home of their own and an opportunity to lead an independent life in a way they choose. Major reforms are underway in Finnish society, in the context of which these objectives can also be promoted.

Helsinki 9.12.2020

Krista Kiuru, Minister of Family Affairs and Social Services

# 1 Frame of reference: key international documents

## 1.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Finnish Treaty Series 26 and 27/2016; UNCRPD, the Convention) and its Optional Protocol entered into force in Finland in 2016. The purpose of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully and equally enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote and protect these rights and freedoms as well as to promote the respect for human dignity of persons with disabilities.

According to section 22 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the public authorities shall guarantee the observance of basic rights and liberties and human rights. By ratifying the Convention, Finland is committed to safeguarding the rights determined under the Convention. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is part of the national legislation in Finland. Consequently, the authorities must take the implementation and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities into account in all of their activities.

The UNCRPD consists of 50 articles. Its articles on the purpose, general principles and obligations of the Convention, equality and non-discrimination, women and children with disabilities, raising awareness, accessibility as well as definitions with significance to the Convention are cross-cutting provisions that must be taken into account when interpreting the contents of all the other articles.

The other articles of the UNCRPD contain more detailed provisions on national measures required under the Convention and on international cooperation, national monitoring systems, the Convention's international monitoring system and meetings of the States Parties.

According to the UNCRPD, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The Convention will raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, improving their opportunities to participate in society. Raising awareness influences the position of the individual through changing attitudes. The Convention will also raise awareness among persons with disabilities of their rights.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasises the participation of persons with disabilities and organisations representing them in all decision-making that affects them. The Convention guarantees the right of a person with disabilities to live independently as part of the community. Universal services must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Individual special services must also be available when necessary.

The Convention emphasises the importance of reasonable accommodations to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are respected. Denial of reasonable accommodation is discrimination.

## 1.2 UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The goals of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted in 2015. They are valid from the beginning of 2016 until 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals are a continuation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The objective of the goals is to make the world a better place by taking into account the environment, people, human rights as well as economic aspects. These goals are universal, which means that they concern all stakeholders: the state, municipalities, companies and other actors. The goals concern all UN Member States.

The Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the fact that all of the goals are important and interlinked. It is impossible to achieve one goal without another, and their achievement requires the input of states, decision-makers and citizens alike.

One of the important goals of the Agenda is reducing inequality and promoting peaceful, fair and inclusive societies as well as protecting human rights. The slogan of the 2030 Agenda is *"Leave no one behind"*. The aim is to first reach those who have been left furthest behind. Attention has been paid to giving a voice to those in the poorest and weakest positions when preparing the declaration.

The Sustainable Development Goals take into account disability and persons with disabilities. The goals refer to disability 11 times in total, especially in the contexts of education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility, data collection and the monitoring of set goals. Although disability is not mentioned in connection with all of the goals, they are significant for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The 2030 Agenda also pays attention to the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities, and it has thus gained prominence in international disability policy alongside with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The long-term slogan of the disability rights movement, *"Nothing about us without us"*, has been paired with a new one, *"Leave no one behind"*.

## **2 National implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

### **2.1 National implementation and monitoring of the UNCRPD**

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are the national focal points for implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has established a national coordination system, the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE). The role of the Advisory Board is to facilitate the national implementation of the Convention within government.

The duties of the autonomous and independent mechanism referred to in the Convention are carried out by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Human Rights Centre and its Human Rights Delegation, which form the National Human Rights Institution. The role of this mechanism is to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention.

International monitoring of UNCRPD implementation takes the form of periodic reports submitted by the States Parties to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The first report is to be submitted within two years after the entry into force of the Convention for the State Party concerned. Finland submitted its first report to the Committee in autumn 2019. Thereafter, States Parties submit subsequent reports every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests. Civil society has the opportunity to submit its parallel report to the Committee. The Committee will consider the report and make its conclusions and recommendations on it.

This monitoring is complemented with the Optional Protocol, under which an individual or group can submit a communication to the Committee on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities regarding a violation of their rights recognised under the Convention. The Optional Protocol also provides for an inquiry conducted by the Committee in case of grave or systematic violations.

## 2.2 Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE

The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE) is a coordination mechanism within government referred to in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its purpose is to facilitate the national implementation of the Convention.

The Advisory Board operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Provisions on the Board's tasks are laid down in Decree (908/2016), under which the Board has the duty to promote the national implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, help ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the activities of all administrative branches, and to elect from among its members a representative of persons with disabilities for the tasks of the focal point referred to in article 33 of the Convention.

The Advisory Board has representatives of ministries, persons with disabilities and their families, labour market organisations, municipalities, counties, and research organisations. The Board has a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a maximum of 16 members and a full-time Secretary-General. It also has one half of a senior specialist's working time at its disposal. The Government appoints the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for four years at a time.

## 2.3 Preparation of the Action Plan

Provisions on the preparation of the Action Plan are laid down in the Government Decree on the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Advisory Board must prepare an Action Plan for its term. The period of the second Action Plan falls in the years 2020–2023. The Action Plan must determine the key national objectives for promoting the implementation of the Convention, measures



to promote these objectives, and how the Action Plan's implementation will be monitored. The various ministries commit to the implementation and objectives of the Action Plan.

The national implementation of the UNCRPD takes place through this Action Plan. This is why the obligation laid down in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to fully involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the entire process must be met in this work. The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has six representatives appointed by disability organisations, coordinates the work on the Action Plan. The Advisory Board has appointed among its members an action plan working group, which includes representatives from different disability organisations.

It was considered necessary to consult disability organisations and stakeholders more extensively to support the preparation of the Action Plan. For this purpose, two hearings were organised for national disability organisations. At the first hearing, the organisations were asked to identify the most important issues that the Action Plan should address. Statements were submitted by 17 disability organisations and speeches were given by 17 organisations at the event. The second hearing took place as the ministries had to a great extent formulated their objectives and measures. At this hearing, the organisations were allowed to comment on the plan and propose further changes to it. Other stakeholders were also met to build a picture of the current situation.

While the Action Plan was under preparation, meetings were held with the ministries which are of key significance to the rights of persons with disabilities. These ministries were the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance. A meeting was also organised with the Social Insurance Institution. A list of the main obligations of the UNCRPD in each administrative branch was compiled for the meetings. The meetings were attended by VANE's Secretary-General, Senior Specialist and Chair, members of the working group on the action plan, and the public officials in charge of the themes under scrutiny from each ministry.

## 3 Basic principles of Action Plan preparation

### 3.1 Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme

Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, *Inclusive and competent Finland*<sup>1</sup>, notes that climate change, globalisation, urbanisation, the ageing of the population and technological development are all transforming Finland and the world perhaps faster than ever before. This transformation offers great opportunities for the development of our country, but it also creates insecurity and concerns about what lies ahead. In the midst of this transformation, we need policy measures that offer people a sense of security and hope for a better future.

The Government Programme emphasises a socially sustainable welfare state which pays attention to the participation of persons with disabilities and the opportunity for them to lead an independent life, receive an education and be part of working life. The Government Programme pays attention to a number of key issues for persons with disabilities, which are itemised in the different content areas of the Action Plan. The Government Programme defines social sustainability as taking responsibility for each other and our common future; there is equality between people, and this is felt to be fair and just. A high standard of health and social services produce wellbeing – and a sense of trust that we will all be looked after when we are not able to do this ourselves.

The Government Programme also considers that wellbeing is based on knowledge and skills and on work and entrepreneurship. The aim is to have the best working life in the world; to be a nation with happy and competent professionals and experts, where every individual's knowledge and skills are put to good use.

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1 Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme 10 December 2019; *Inclusive and competent Finland* – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society. Finnish government publications 2019:31.

Finland is an open, international country. Finland promotes the rule of law, respect for human rights and cooperation across borders.

In its programme, the Government commits to reforming the political culture and decision-making. Reforming society can succeed only if we strengthen people's trust in the ability of our democratic system to function.

## 3.2 Summary of the hearing organised for disability organisations

Two hearings were organised for disability organisations as part of the work on the Action Plan. The purpose of the hearings was to determine what the disability organisations perceived as the most important issues to be addressed during the Action Plan period. In February 2020, disability organisations were asked to list three to five issues that, from their perspective, would be the most important ones to address in the implementation of the UNCRPD during this period. Written statements were also requested. At the hearing, 17 organisations took the floor and 17 submitted a statement. The priorities identified by the organisations were taken into account as a whole when preparing for discussions with the ministries. In November 2020, the organisations were consulted as finishing touches were being put on the Action Plan at a hearing which was also attended by the ministries. At that time, 18 organisations contributed, and all of them also gave a written statement. A summary overview of the themes brought up by the NGOs is given below.

Several organisations drew attention to *work and employment* and the fact that this right is not implemented equally with other people. They stressed the need to raise the employment rate of persons with disabilities and, among other things, brought up the significance of positive discrimination as well as the fact that individual support measures and cooperation between different actors are needed to respond to the challenges. Attitudes were also found to be a problem. More job coaches and work ability coordinators would be needed to support employment.

The *right to adequate social security and standard of living* was also brought up as an important right. Disability organisations stressed the importance of an adequate level of social security and the fact that costs incurred form a disability or illness

should not lead to an inadequate income. Several organisations drew attention to the challenges related to combining social security and an earned income. They welcomed the continued preparation of a linear model for eliminating incentive traps.

*Reasonable accommodations* were seen as an issue on which more information would be needed. Its importance was emphasised in several statements, especially in working life and education.

*Accessibility* was also highlighted in several contributions. In addition to the physical environment, the organisations wished to pay attention to the accessibility of digital services. Linguistic rights were also seen as a cross-cutting right. The right to receive Swedish-language services was highlighted as an important right. The need for information in easy-to-read language and sign language, among other things, was seen as an important issue to be promoted. The importance of interpretation services and problems in accessing them and having individual needs taken into account were also highlighted.

The *right to health* was a theme that was discussed from many perspectives and also in several contributions. Among other things, the contributors would like healthcare professionals to have more information on the rights of persons with disabilities, and shortcomings were identified in the accessibility of health services. The organisations reported discrimination experienced on the grounds of disability in healthcare and cases in which even the right to life of a person with a disability has at times been questioned.

The importance of *disability services* was stressed. In particular, personal assistance and the problems associated with it, mobility services and housing services were highlighted. Shortcomings in procurement practices were also brought up. In the context of housing services, completing the process aiming to end institutional housing, the lack of real choice as a problem, and the need to develop more individual housing solutions were stressed. In transport services, problems with access to taxi services and variations in service quality were highlighted.

*The right to rehabilitation* was another theme brought up by several organisations. Sufficient, individual and timely rehabilitation was considered important. The importance of individual assistive devices in facilitating independent living was

also emphasised. As an issue related to assistive devices, attention was drawn to excessive waiting times.

The importance of *education* was stressed. Arrangements for adequate individual support in the public education system were considered important. Discrimination in education should be tackled more effectively. NGOs also found educational institutions' awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities inadequate.

*Participation* both in processes that concern a person's own life and, more broadly, in such areas as developing the legislation was considered important. The need to realise participation at both the local and the national level was emphasised. *Supported decision-making* was regarded as an important issue on which legislation and the sharing of good practices are needed.

The *knowledge base* concerning disability was found inadequate. Organisations called for reliable and versatile information on the lives of persons with different disabilities. Strengthening the knowledge base was considered essential from the perspective of monitoring and reporting on the realisation of rights. Developing the *monitoring system for discrimination* was also considered important.

## 4 Content areas, snapshots, objectives and measures

This Chapter sets out the key requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as snapshots, objectives and measures related to implementing the Convention in each content area.

The human rights indicators of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have been used to describe the current situation<sup>2</sup>. The indicators were developed to support the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation and promotion of human rights treaties. In the guide on the human rights indicators, the indicators are defined as “... *specific information on the state or condition of an object, event, activity or outcome that can be related to human rights norms and standards; that addresses and reflects human rights principles and concerns; and that can be used to assess and monitor the promotion and implementation of human rights.*”

The publication highlights the need for quantitative, qualitative, subjective and objective indicators. It is, however, important to be clear about the limitations of their use and the fact that they cannot replace a comprehensive qualitative or legal assessment. The indicator model developed by the UN distinguishes between structural, process and outcome indicators. This makes it possible to describe firstly, the acceptance, intent or commitment to the human rights obligation, the efforts required to make that commitment a reality, and finally the results of those efforts.

In the work on the Action Plan, the model has been applied by putting together a snapshot consisting of three elements. Firstly, the structures that support the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities are described, including

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation; United Nations Human Rights; Office of the High Commissioner; available online at [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Human\\_rights\\_indicators\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_en.pdf)

legislation and oversight of legality. The second element describes the process, or the policy measures that promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the administrative branch in question. The third element describes the outcome, or the extent to which the rights are realised, based on such information as experiential knowledge and statistics. Each ministry has drawn up a description of the current status in its area of responsibility. The first four content areas (inclusion; non-discrimination and equality of persons with disabilities; raising awareness and building the knowledge basis; and accessibility) are cross-cutting themes which must also be taken into consideration in the implementation of the other articles. In addition, this Action Plan addresses the status and rights of women and children with disabilities as special cross-cutting themes.

The objectives were set and the measures selected on the basis of the snapshots produced and the issues raised by disability organisations and stakeholders. The ministries are committed to attaining the objectives and implementing the measures for which they are responsible. The Action Plan assigns responsibility for each measure to a specific party or parties.

## 4.1 Participation of persons with disabilities (Article 4.3 of UNCRPD)

According to the UNCRPD, the States Parties shall consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes concerning them. This mainly takes place through disability organisations. Children with disabilities must also be included in the decision-making that concerns them.

### 4.1.1 Structural indicators

According to the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the public authorities shall promote the opportunities for an individual to participate in societal activity and to influence the decisions that concern him or her. According to section 6(3) of the Constitution of Finland, children shall be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.

The national mechanisms referred to in article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include representatives of persons with disabilities. The focal point has a representative of disability organisations, and the coordination mechanism (the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) has six representatives of disability organisations, in addition to the Vice-Chair. A Disability Rights Committee operates as a permanent division of the Human Rights Delegation.

National disability organisations in Finland have established the Finnish Disability Forum, an umbrella organisation for around 30 disability organisations. In addition, Swedish disability organisations form Samarbetsförbundet kring funktionshinder (SAMS) rf. Most disability organisations are also members of SOSTE, a national umbrella organisation for social and health care organisations. While both individual disability organisations as well as umbrella organisations are regularly consulted in connection with most major legislation and reform projects, participation continues to be somewhat haphazard and varies between administrative branches. Most member organisations of the Finnish Disability Forum are supported financially by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA).

### 4.1.2 Process indicators

The Ministry of Justice's Action Plan on Democracy Policy set out to provide more electoral information and to target it at the groups which have the lowest voting rates. Over the past decade, the Ministry of Justice has developed an extensive electoral information package, which includes television advertising, a letter sent to young people who are voting for the first time, a letter to immigrants who have been granted the right to vote (citizens and foreigners), online communication (vaalit.fi, Facebook and Twitter), electoral information in about twenty of the most widely spoken languages, electoral brochures and updated electoral videos in easy-to-read language, sign language material and material for persons with visual impairments. A WhatsApp service has been introduced alongside the traditional electoral service helpline. The updated vaalit.fi website is a fairly well-known channel of electoral communication, and it registers about half a million visitors per day before elections.



The Ministry of Justice maintains electronic democracy services, which include kansalaisaloite.fi, kuntalaisaloite.fi, nuortenideat.fi, otakantaa.fi and lausuntopalvelu.fi. The purpose of these services is to improve the transparency of governance and the citizens' opportunities to participate in the preparation of matters and decision-making. These services can be found on the website demokratia.fi.

Every year, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has provided support to one NGO representative and, if necessary, their personal assistant to cover the expenses of travel to the meeting of the UNCRPD Conference of the States Parties.

As part of a disability legislation reform that has been pending for years, practices of consulting disability organisations have been and will be implemented, and disability organisations are also broadly represented in a working group preparing a proposal for promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the client process of social welfare and services for the persons with disabilities. The representation of disability organisations in preparations for the health and social services reform and social security reform has also been secured.

In the context of the health and social services reform, a regional government reform is being prepared, which includes plans to establish regional disability councils. These structures play a role in ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities, provided that they are given adequate prerequisites for operating and that they are supported by both counties and municipalities. The personal awareness and activity of persons with disabilities is also crucial in determining the actual significance of the councils. The Ministry of Finance, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have collaborated on a guide that supports the establishment of regional disability councils.

The National Child Strategy, the preparation of which is currently underway, also aims to strengthen the participation of children and young people and, in particular, to address the participation of those children and young people who are often overlooked. The work on the Child Strategy is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a compilation of the fundamental and human rights obligations related to the Convention can be found in a report on the legal context of the National Child Strategy of 20 May 2020 (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

reports and memoranda 2020: 20; <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-5417-5>). The report highlights the legal basis of the status of children and young people with disabilities and the recommendations of human rights monitoring bodies.

The National Child Strategy will be completed in late 2020, after which an implementation plan for the current term of government will be prepared and put into practice. It is essential that the obligations of the UNCRPD are taken into account in the preparation of the National Child Strategy, any efforts to promote children's and young people's participation, and in the implementation plan for the term of government.

Disability organisations are also part of the Advisory Board for Digitalisation in Daily Life ('Digi arkeen'), whose members represent NGOs, research stakeholders and ministries. In spring 2019, the Advisory Board's mandate was extended beyond the term of government until the end of 2019, and the objective is to continue these activities in the term of government 2019–2023. The Advisory Board supports the development of digital services with the idea of enabling all population groups to make equal use of the benefits and opportunities offered by digitalisation. Simplified remote meeting practices have been introduced, which has partly also supported the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Disability organisations participated in drafting a plan titled Safe and incident-free daily life: Action plan for incident prevention for the rescue services, which was published by the Ministry of the Interior in December 2019. The basic premise of the action plan project was to involve stakeholders across a broad front in its workshop activities. The NGOs invited to participate in the stakeholder work included the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities and the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

The Ministry of the Environment involves persons with disabilities in its work. For example, they are represented in the stakeholder forum for the overhaul of the Land Use and Building Act to be implemented in 2018–2021, and discussion events on the Accessibility Decree are organised regularly for disability organisations.

### 4.1.3 Outcome indicators

The Deputy Chancellor of Justice assessed the participation of persons with disabilities in the drafting of legislation and development projects in his decision OKV/1/50/2018 of 28 March 2019. He notes that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the administration subordinate to it have consulted organisations representing persons with disabilities when preparing legislation and guidelines and involved them in the drafting processes. However, studies indicate that persons with disabilities continue to participate considerably less in society compared to other citizens, with the exception of participation in NGO activities. The same trend was also visible in the results of a survey conducted by the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the autumn of 2017. Out of a total of 577 respondents, 317 felt their participation was realised either poorly or relatively poorly, while only 99 respondents found that their participation had been achieved either well or relatively well.

At the hearing organised in spring 2020, disability organisations brought up the need to secure the participation of persons with disabilities and disability organisations at the local, national and legislative level alike. Organisations would like to see concrete measures aiming to examine and promote their involvement, including prominent participation of persons with disabilities in the health and social services reform and the social security reform. Organisations stressed that the possibility for genuine involvement can only be realised equally if daily services that support participation work appropriately and the impacts on persons with disabilities are assessed at all levels of society's activities.

Studies have indicated that participation is prevented by such issues as a poor economic situation as well as other barriers, including inaccessibility of the environment and services, climate of attitudes, insufficient assistance and support or a lack of adequate possibilities for participation. Structural reforms in society, including the regional government, health and social services reform, provide an opportunity to develop new channels and forms of participation through which the inclusion of persons with disabilities can be promoted.

On a general level, it could be said that the participation of persons with disabilities should be increased in such areas as legislative drafting by developing equality impact assessments and also by consulting interest groups whenever

the legislation in question is widely applicable to all citizens, ensuring that the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities is sufficiently taken into account.

While efforts have been made in legislation on different fields to safeguard children's inclusion and participation rights, the existing structures and practices are not always adequate to implement these rights. In particular, children and young people with disabilities, restricted functional capacity or a long-term illness risk being overlooked and deprived of possibility to influence matters related to them.

#### 4.1.4 Fostering inclusion and participation: objectives and measures

##### **Objective:**

Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in different sectors and levels of central government.

##### **Measure:**

1. Ensuring by appropriate means the participation of persons with disabilities in legislative reforms and other drafting and decision-making that are essential for them.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*

##### **Objective:**

Transitioning from individual hearings to systematic and structural participation and collaboration.

##### **Measure:**

2. Regularly inviting advocacy organisations and experts by experience to stakeholder events and workshops.

*Responsible body: All ministries*

**Objective:**

Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties.

**Measure:**

3. Supporting organisations that represent the rights of persons with disabilities in more extensive participation in monitoring the implementation of human rights treaties, including providing UN treaty monitoring bodies with information on the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities in each area to which the treaty in question applies, both for the Committee's list of issues, the responses to which form the government's periodic report, and as the so-called independent parallel report submitted in addition to the government's periodic report.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in international disability policy.

**Measures:**

4. Supporting the participation of a disability organisation representative in the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
5. Encouraging more extensive participation of organisations representing the rights of persons with disabilities in periodic reporting on human rights treaties.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the genuine participation of persons with disabilities at local and regional level.

**Measure:**

6. Through knowledge-based management and spreading of good practices, supporting the activities of municipal and regional disability councils to ensure that they have opportunities to exert influence and sufficient resources.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Justice.*

**Objective:**

Advocating the rights of Sámi persons with disabilities in national disability policy, drafting and decision-making.

**Measure:**

7. Organising cooperation meetings with the Sámi Parliament and SámiSoster association on topical issues related to services for persons with disabilities and disability policy.

*Responsible body: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.*

## 4.2 Equality and non-discrimination (Articles 5, 6, 7, 12 and 13 of the UNCRPD)

Everyone is equal before the law and entitled to equal protection and equal benefits. States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to provide the support they may require in exercising their legal capacity. Discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited. The Convention pays particular attention to the status of children and women with disabilities. They must be entitled to the enjoyment of all rights on an equal basis with others.

### 4.2.1 Structural indicators

The purpose of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) is to foster and safeguard equality and enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against. The Act applies to public and private activities, however not those falling within the scope of private affairs, family life or religious practice.

The Finnish Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) was updated at the beginning of 2015. This revision included many improvements significant to the legal protection of persons with disabilities, most importantly a provision according to which denial of reasonable accommodation is regarded as discrimination, as well as including discrimination against persons with disabilities in the mandates of the authorities supervising compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act. According to the Non-Discrimination Act, authorities, education providers and employers must assess and promote equality regarding all grounds for discrimination prohibited according to the Act, including disability.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Non-Discrimination Act in the government, drafting guidelines and supporting the assessment of equality and equality planning.

A person's right to self-determination is extensively protected in Finnish legislation. The Constitution of Finland (731/1999) as well as the social welfare and health care legislation contain several provisions on clients' and patients' right to self-determination. The Constitution guarantees the inviolability of human dignity and the freedom and rights of the individual and promotes justice in society. The Constitution covers the fundamental rights that belong to everyone, including the right to equality, life, personal liberty and integrity, freedom of movement, right to privacy, right to social security and right to one's language.

The purpose of the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014) is to promote and maintain wellbeing and social security, reduce inequalities and foster inclusion, safeguard adequate social services and other measures of a high quality provided on equal grounds that meet the client's needs and promote wellbeing, and promote a client-centric approach and the client's right to good service and treatment in social welfare.

The Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992) and the Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000) promote a client-centric approach and confidentiality of client relationships as well as the right of clients and patients to good service and treatment in social and health care. These acts apply to both public and private social welfare and health care services. The acts contain provisions on taking the client's and patient's interests, preferences and opinions into account as well as on finding out about their wishes, respecting their right to self-determination, and their possibilities to participate and influence the planning and implementation of the services provided for them.

The Act on Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977) emphasises the right of every person with a disability to participate fully in society. Their wishes, opinions and individual needs must be taken into account, and the possibility to participate and influence their personal affairs must be guaranteed for them. Their self-determination must be strengthened, and their independent coping must be supported. The Act was amended in 2016. The amendments reinforced the right to self-determination and independent coping of a person in special care. Their aims also included reducing the use of restrictive measures in special care. Restrictive measures may only be used where this is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person in question or someone else, or where there is a need to prevent significant damage to property. Restrictive measures may not be used if a less forceful option is available, and the use of the restrictive measure must cease as soon as it is no longer necessary.

The purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) is to prevent discrimination based on gender, gender identity or the expression of gender, to promote equality between women and men, and thus to improve the status of women, particularly in working life. The Equality Act contains three types of provisions: those promoting equality, those banning discrimination, and those related to legal protection and enforcement. As a rule, the Act on Equality between Women and Men applies to all social activity and in all areas of life. It is not applied to relationships between family members or other relationships in private life, or to activities associated with religious practices.

In its conclusions issued to Finland in 2014, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommended such measures as promoting the participation of women with disabilities in the labour



market, taking action to repeal the legislation on the sterilization of women with disabilities, and developing legal remedies for women with disabilities against multiple and intersectional discrimination.

### 4.2.2 Process indicators

The Government Programme contains several measures related to promoting equality which also play a role in the realisation of equality among persons with disabilities in Finnish society. Among other things, the Government is committed to competence building and awareness raising related to minorities issues among the authorities, implementing a partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act, making equality and non-discrimination plans at different levels of education obligatory, including in the field of early childhood education and care, and preventing discrimination in recruitment and examining anonymous recruitments. All these measures play a role in the realisation of the equality of persons with disabilities, and putting them successfully to practice will support the implementation of the UNCRPD in Finland.

As stated in the Government Programme, the Ministry of Justice has launched or will launch a partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014); prepare an action plan against racism and discrimination and for good relations between population groups; initiate a national reconciliation process concerning the violations of the rights of the deaf throughout Finland's history; appoint an advisory board on sign language matters (to assess the implementation of the Sign Language Act and the realisation of the fundamental rights and non-discrimination of sign language users); and prepare a language policy programme (that covers the sign languages).

The Ministry of Justice will also carry out a number of projects related to equality and non-discrimination in which disability policy issues are addressed. The objectives of the Facts against Hate project is to raise awareness of hate crime and hate speech among persons with disabilities and to reduce underreporting. The project will produce materials on hate crime, hate speech and discrimination in easy-to-read language and sign language and provide training for persons with disabilities in five locations.

A working group on equality is responsible for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the actions of Ministry of Education and Culture. The working group also deals with issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities. In autumn 2018, the group worked together with the ministry's departments to prepare descriptions of measures through which the ministry has promoted equality and non-discrimination in practical terms. The Ministry of Education and Culture's key policies on promoting equality and non-discrimination have been collected in the ministry's Action plan for operational gender equality and non-discrimination. These policies, which were formulated with the ministry's cooperation groups, concern the ministry's 1) performance and target guidance, 2) discretionary government transfers and grants, 3) drafting of legislation, 4) education, and 5) communication.

The Ministry of the Interior has appointed a working group to prepare an action plan on equality and non-discrimination in rescue services. The working group will also serve as an expert on equality and non-discrimination issues in evaluations of legislative projects relevant to rescue services and guidelines applicable to the sector.

The Ministry of the Interior's equality and non-discrimination plan for 2020–2021 was adopted in March 2020. The Ministry of the Interior has identified fostering equality and non-discrimination as one of the priorities in the entire administrative branch's performance guidance. The equality and non-discrimination plans of both the ministry and the agencies in its administrative branch will be updated, and the impacts of their activities on equality and non-discrimination will be assessed as part of the planning process. The staff will receive training focusing on equality and non-discrimination issues in 2021.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is currently finalising its new equality and non-discrimination plan. In the new plan the status of persons with disabilities is, among other things, analysed in the context of domestic violence, social and health services and social security.

The provisions on the right to self-determination have undergone a lengthy drafting process. A government proposal submitted to Parliament in 2014 lapsed at the end of the government term. In 2018, a working group appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health issued a new legislative proposal with

the intention of strengthening clients' right to self-determination in social and health care. The new act was also to include provisions on involuntary psychiatric treatment and involuntary substance abuse treatment.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health intends to appoint a new legislative working group, which will continue to draft the provisions on self-determination. In addition, a working group that will monitor the drafting process is to be appointed. The legislation is to include provisions on such issues as strengthening the right to self-determination of persons undergoing involuntary treatment and older people as well as on the use of restrictive measures. In its work and when preparing the new proposal, the working group will take into account international human rights treaties, the requirements laid down in the Constitution, and the studies and reports focusing on restrictions of the right to self-determination as well as substance abuse and mental health legislation prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, in addition to initiatives submitted to the ministry. So far, the more detailed content of the legislation has not been outlined.

### 4.2.3 Outcome indicators

At the hearing held in spring 2020, disability organisations highlighted the need to develop and strengthen a systematic mechanism for monitoring discrimination in all administrative branches. In addition, several organisations emphasised the importance of strengthening understanding of equality and raising awareness among persons with disabilities, especially of the various hidden forms of discrimination and ways of intervening in it. NGOs would also like the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman to have additional powers to intervene in discrimination encountered by persons with disabilities. In a survey conducted by VANE in 2017, the respondents found that equality is realised rather poorly, and that they experienced discrimination especially in matters related to work and finding employment.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

## 4.2.4 Fostering equality: objectives and measures

**Objective:**

Promoting the de facto equality of persons with disabilities in all sectors and at all levels of administration.

**Measure:**

8. Addressing the equality of persons with disabilities in the ministries' equality and non-discrimination plans and action plans.

*Responsible body: All ministries*

**Objective:**

Ensuring the fulfilment of obligations of the UNCRPD in the pending legislation on self-determination.

**Measures:**

9. Organising a round table discussion on supported decision-making to underpin the drafting of legislation.

10. Investigating good practices for supported decision-making together with disability organisations.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice*

11. Ensuring that the special needs of persons with disabilities and the obligations of the UNCRPD are taken into account fully in the preparation and later implementation of the legislation on the right of self-determination.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality and non-discrimination as a strategic and visible part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's system of discretionary government transfers and knowledge-based management.

**Measure:**

12. Investigating the possibilities of promoting equality and non-discrimination through discretionary government transfers.

Organising training and workshops for stakeholders participating in the discretionary government transfers process to support the development of the activities. When implementing the change, ensuring that the lessons learned from it can also be used by other organisations disbursing grants.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality and quality development in early childhood education and care, basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training.

**Measures:**

13. Improving the effectiveness of education, reducing learning differences and fostering equality through large-scale projects aiming to improve quality and equality.

14. In line with Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched development programmes to improve quality and equality in early childhood education and care and basic education for 2020–2022. The projects of the development programme focus on reforming legislation, improving the effectiveness of funding systems for early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education as well as seek effective practices and operating methods that strengthen equality. A development programme of quality and equality for 2020–2022 has been launched in vocational education and training. Its aim is to guarantee the quality and support the continuous improvement of vocational education and training in line with the effectiveness targets and policies of the VET Quality Strategy. The programme's aims also include narrowing and preventing gaps in learning and learning outcomes linked to gender, socio-economic background, place of residence or need for support, thus promoting equality and non-discrimination in vocational education and training. A programme to develop the quality of general upper secondary

education will also be launched in 2021. The foundation for quality management and development will be strengthened by drafting a quality strategy for general upper secondary education in close cooperation with stakeholders, as well as proposals for measures implementing the strategy that will support the development of quality management required in the general upper secondary school legislation. As part of the quality programme for general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, a development project for guidance counselling will be implemented with the aim of systematising the operating methods and practices of guidance at the national level and ensuring that they treat all students equally.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Producing more information on discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

15. Strengthening the system of monitoring discrimination with regard to research evidence on discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Reforming the non-discrimination legislation

**Measures:**

16. As part of the partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act, examining the possibilities of strengthening regulation that promotes the equality of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Combating hate crime and hate speech against persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

17. Carrying out development projects to combat hate crime and hate speech against persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Combating multiple discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

18. Developing measures related to multiple discrimination (taking persons with disabilities into account) in the Action Plan against racism and for good relations.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

## 4.3 Raising awareness and building a knowledge base (Articles 8 and 31 of the UNCRPD)

Awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities must be raised, and stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities must be combated. Statistical and research data must be collected to implement the Convention.

### 4.3.1 Structural indicators

While raising awareness of disability in society and among persons with disabilities is a cross-administrative task, the mechanisms referred to in article 33

of the UNCRPD have a particular obligation to promote this objective. Disability organisations also play an important role in raising awareness.

For example, the website of the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE ([www.vane.to](http://www.vane.to)) provides information on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in different languages. In addition to Finnish and Swedish, the introductory texts of the site are provided in Finnish and Finnish Swedish sign languages, the three Sámi languages spoken in Finland, and in easy-to-read Finnish and Swedish. VANE has also produced the entire text of the Convention in sign language, in Braille and as an audio file. An easy-to-read version of the Convention is under preparation.

Several authorities in Finland have an obligation to collect data on different issues concerning persons with disabilities (including Statistics Finland, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare). In addition, different authorities, organisations, service providers and researchers collect and/or use data. There are also some statutory registers in Finland, such as the Finnish Register of Visual Impairment. Information is additionally collected using different barometer surveys; for example, the Ministry of Justice collects information on discrimination in this way.

Population studies are used to monitor the health and well-being of the population. In these studies, disability is mainly approached from the viewpoint of restricted functional capacity. Questions related to functional capacity can be used to identify persons who feel that their functional capacity is restricted in various ways.

The Client data archive for social welfare services, which is part of Kanta services, contains information on social welfare services. In the future, organisers and providers of disability services can store social welfare client data in this archive. As the social welfare client data are saved to Kanta in a structure format, information on social services will also be more readily available. This means that individual level data on social services and their users can be obtained in the same way as on health services and service users. The document structures for disability services can be found in the web service [sosmeta.fi](http://sosmeta.fi).

Now that they are part of the Kanta services, the client data are stored in a single register, which enables better access to the data in this sector. As the old



boundaries between registers cease to exist, the data can be examined based on verification of association and access rights. At the moment, joining the Client data archive for social welfare services is voluntary.

By using harmonised recording practices and client document structures, it is possible to produce comparable data on client relationships with disability services and information needs related to services for local and national statistics, evaluations and research purposes alike. The Act on the Secondary Use of Social and Health Data (552/2019) has enabled a controller to use data in their own files since spring 2019. The Secondary Use Act will be applied to Kanta services as from 1 January 2021.

The secondary use of health and social data means that the client and register data created in the course of health and social service sector activities are used for purposes other than the primary reason for which they were originally saved. As the Act was passed, the Health and Social Data Permit Authority Findata was established in conjunction with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and started operating at the beginning of 2020. Findata is a one-stop shop for the secondary use of social and health sector data. The operations of Findata are being rolled out in stages.

From 2020, Findata grants permits for the secondary use of social and health data when data provided by more than one controller are merged, the register data originate from private social and health care service providers, or the permit concerns data stored in Kanta services.

The Secondary Use Act (552/2019) has significantly expanded the purposes for which data can be used. They include scientific research, statistics, development and innovation, the steering and supervision as well as planning and reporting tasks of the authorities, and teaching and knowledge-based management.

While aggregated statistical data can be accessed for all purposes specified in the Secondary Use Act, a data utilisation plan is required to access them. Access to anonymised or pseudonymised data for research purposes is provided via a remote user interface. Data access is provided via a remote use interface for all other purposes cited in the Secondary Use Act except development and innovation. It is to be hoped that this new opportunity will also promote research related to disability.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has access to data on students, student numbers and education programmes obtained from Statistics Finland, the education administration's statistical service Vipunen, and the Finnish National Agency for Education's Koski data warehouse. No data are available separately on students with disabilities, as the statistics are not directly based on disability. Quantitative data are available on pupils receiving intensified and demanding special support as laid down in the legislation, students receiving intensified or demanding special support, and students who receive special needs education. These data concern learners who have a wide variety of support needs, including different learning difficulties, disabilities and illnesses and other support needs. The number of learners with disabilities cannot be determined based on these figures.

A total of 1,690 pupils with the most severe intellectual disabilities and 9,800 pupils other than those with the most severe intellectual disabilities were within the scope of extended compulsory education on 20 September 2019. Pupils with disabilities who complete the compulsory education in nine years are not included in these figures. In 2018, approx. 21,000 students received special support in vocational education and training, while around 4,500 students received demanding special support.

### 4.3.2 Process indicators

Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme notes that persons with disabilities will be made more aware of their rights and the realization of these rights will be monitored.

In 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched the Toivo programme to speed up the implementation of the Act on the Secondary Use of Social and Health Data and, in particular, knowledge-based management as well as steering and supervision by the authorities. This programme will go on until the end of 2023.

The projects of the Toivo programme will contribute to developing the knowledge base of disability services. The objective of the Virta project, which is part of the Toivo programme, is to develop knowledge-based management in the counties, putting at their disposal up-to-date and reliable data on the status of the county's services for the purposes of managing, coordinating and monitoring the activities

and supervising the producer network. The objective of the Valtava project likewise included in the Toivo programme is to reform national data production, ensuring that the data needed for the management, coordination and supervision of services will be uniform, comparable, comprehensive, high in quality and up to date, and that the data can be used better through different service channels and open interfaces.

A working paper titled Roadmap for Systematic Data Collection in Services for People with Disabilities published by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare in 2020 describes a process that would help produce more data on the impacts of changes in services for the disabled, among other things. The preconditions for this would include assessing, developing and systematically collecting register data. In addition to register data, data collected at population level will be needed. Questions describing restrictions of functional capacity should be included in all population surveys. In the future, population surveys could be complemented with an additional module. This additional module which could, for example, be addressed to people using disability services would provide more in-depth information, among other things provided by persons who are unable to answer questions by writing. Separate investigations and studies would still be needed in the future, as register data or population surveys cannot throw light on all issues.

In 2019, the Ministry of Justice carried out a fundamental rights barometer survey. It provided additional information on the experiences of persons with disabilities regarding the realisation of different fundamental rights.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has disseminated information on the rights of persons with disabilities in connection with various discretionary government grants, projects and studies as well as at training and information events, and required the actors to commit to fostering equality. The knowledge base of persons with disabilities has also been complemented to support UNCPRD implementation by means of different studies and evaluations and by appointing working groups in which disability organisations are represented. Different data collection methods have also been developed to provide more detailed information for such purposes as monitoring and developing the realisation of inclusion. Eleven folk high schools operating in the liberal adult education sector provide education for persons with disabilities, either as their main educational task or as a special task included in their educational task.

While provisions on special needs teaching in general upper secondary education will enter into force together with the new curricula on 1 August 2021, upper secondary schools basically are already compliant with the regulations in this respect. Special needs teaching in general upper secondary education is different in nature from what is laid down in similar provisions applicable to basic education, which is why keeping statistics on it is challenging. Once organising special needs teaching becomes mandatory in upper secondary schools, keeping statistics on it must be reconsidered.

### 4.3.3 Outcome indicators

Awareness of and information on disability are closely interlinked. We need more information on disability to raise awareness of disability issues and strengthen the authorities' understanding of the needs related to them. On the other hand, raising awareness drives a need for information. The need for awareness-raising and more information concerns service providers, authorities and persons with disabilities alike.

A lack of accurate information persists on such issues as the numbers of persons with disabilities in the labour market or children with disabilities at different levels of education. While information is available on persons with partial work ability and children in need of support, disability is hidden in existing statistics. Disability is a complex phenomenon which cannot be fully and exhaustively defined. This makes it impossible to determine the exact number of persons with disabilities in society.

However, disability can be examined from specific perspectives that make up the big picture. The precondition for complementing the knowledge base of disability is not only identifying individual issues but also understanding the overall situation. The building of the big picture is supported by the periodic reports submitted to the UN, for which information on the realisation of the fundamental and human rights of persons with disabilities is collected across a broad front.

At the hearing of spring 2020, disability organisations emphasised the need to systematically strengthen the knowledge base related to disability. Disability organisations stress that information on persons with disabilities and in different life situations should be collected systematically and following a specific strategy,

avoiding a situation where the knowledge base relies solely on organisations' resources. At the hearing organised in autumn 2020, organisations highlighted the need for a register of rare diseases. They would also like authorities to receive more training related to disability and the rights of persons with disabilities. In a survey conducted by VANE in 2017, the possibility of using experts by experience in raising awareness was brought up.<sup>4</sup>

In spring 2020, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children carried out a survey addressed to experts in the disability field on the rights of children with disabilities. Based on the survey results, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children will edit a compilation work on the rights of children with disabilities in 2021. This work will be used to raise wider awareness of the personal views and experiences of children and young people with disabilities of their daily possibilities of attending education and having hobbies, their well-being and the realisation of their rights and inclusion. The target readers of the publication will be policy-makers, authorities, families and children.

#### 4.3.4 Raising awareness and building a knowledge base: objectives and measures

##### **Objectives:**

Building up the knowledge base of the study possibilities available for persons with disabilities in liberal adult education and ensuring the availability of research evidence on this topic in the future.

Recognising the rights of persons with disabilities and actively promoting their realisation in liberal adult education institutions.

##### **Measure:**

19. Investigating the realisation of equality and non-discrimination in liberal adult education institutions.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

4 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

**Objectives:**

Ensuring that persons with disabilities receive the support they need during the coronavirus crisis and after it to prevent exclusion. Building up the knowledge base of the experiences that persons with disabilities and other special groups have had during the pandemic in order to provide appropriate and adequate support.

**Measure:**

20. Conducting a survey that includes questions about the experiences of persons with disabilities and other special groups during the coronavirus pandemic and the support needs created by the pandemic in the administrative branches of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Building up a knowledge base related to education and training for persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

21. Examining legislative barriers to building up a knowledge base of disability issues and striving to eliminate them.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness among persons with disabilities of the conclusions, recommendations and general comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Measures:**

22. Translating the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on UNCPRD implementation into Finland's national languages (Finnish and Swedish), and distributing them widely for information.

23. Organising a discussion session for the authorities and disability organisations on the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

24. Encouraging disability organisations to comment on the drafts of general comments produced by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which comprise the Committee's interpretations of the content and application of the Convention's articles.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

## 4.4 Accessibility

### *(Articles 9 and 21 of the CRDP)*

Persons with disabilities must be ensured equal access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas.

Persons with disabilities must have the right to the freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through all forms of communication of their choice. Private entities and the mass media must be urged to provide information and services in accessible formats for persons with disabilities.

Information intended for the general public must be provided to persons with disabilities in an accessible format without additional cost. The modes and formats of communication used by persons with disabilities, including sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication must be facilitated in official interactions and information provision.

### 4.4.1 Structural indicators

Accessibility is taken into account as a general viewpoint in the current Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) in land use planning (section 5), the objectives of building guidance (section 12) and the requirements concerning construction (section 117).

The Government Decree on the Accessibility of Buildings (241/2017) adds detail to the obligations laid down in the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999). The purpose of the minimum accessibility requirements for buildings is to promote equality between people: everyone's possibility to participate in society, use services, work, choose their place of residence and live in their home. The obligations of the Accessibility Decree apply to a building and its plot or building site.

The Ministry of the Environment has published a guideline related to the Accessibility Decree which sets out the provisions of the Decree and recommendations related to their application. In addition, the Ministry of the Environment has published a planning guide titled *The accessible building and environment*.

In addition to what is provided in the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999), no provisions on obligations regarding accessibility in public areas are laid down in any decree. Taking accessibility into account is part of methodical property management, however, even if no measures requiring a building permit are pending.

In addition to knowledge-based management, financial support and grants are an important means of promoting accessibility. The Act on Renovation Grants for Residential Buildings and Apartments (1087/2016) contains provisions on grants disbursed from central government funds for retrofitting lifts and removing barriers to mobility in residential buildings and for renovating housing units for older persons and persons with disabilities, allowing them to continue living at home. These grants are available from the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA). The grants are used to make a residential building and the units or other facilities located in it accessible to a person with restricted mobility.

ARA also disburses grants for renovating the homes of low-income older persons and persons with disabilities. The Government has issued a Decree on Renovation



Grants for Residential Buildings and Dwellings (1373/2016), according to which a grant may be disbursed for a measure carried out in a dwelling if at least one member of the household permanently living in it is aged 65 or over or, due to a disability or illness, has particular long-standing difficulties in coping with normal daily activities.

According to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (380/1987), a municipality may reimburse the costs of alterations to a home and equipment used in the home if they are needed by a person with a disability. These support measures are based on the person's individual needs.

The Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) obliges authorities, education providers, employers and suppliers of goods or services to promote accessibility and requires them to make reasonable accommodations and to be prepared for the most common situations requiring accommodations. However, reasonable accommodations only refer to changes which are made if necessary and on a case-by-case basis if they do not cause an unreasonable inconvenience and if they ensure the equality of persons with disabilities with others.

Section 4 of the Off-road Traffic Act (1710/1995) contains a provision on the right of persons with severe physical disabilities and persons accompanying them to drive a motor vehicle off the road without the landowner's or holder's permission. The purpose of this exception to the basic rules has been to ensure that persons with disabilities can have access to recreation in a natural environment, for example on a quad or a snowmobile.

The Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019) entered into force on 1 April 2019, and its application began in stages on 23 September 2019. It was passed to implement the Web Accessibility Directive. The minimum scope of the Directive was extended at the national level to encompass certain private sector actors whose digital services are essential for using the digital services of the public sector. To monitor compliance with the Act, a monitoring group was established, in which VANE and disability organisations are represented.

The Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland is the authority competent to supervise compliance with the accessibility requirements laid down in the Act on the Provision Digital Services in Finland. The Agency's tasks include

providing general guidance and advice on the accessibility requirements and the realisation of accessibility rights, to handle reports (complaints and investigation requests) regarding accessibility challenges encountered by digital service users, to supervise compliance with accessibility requirements, and to regularly consult various stakeholders about compliance with the accessibility requirements. The Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland also reports on the monitoring results to the European Commission.

On 2 December 2015, the European Commission issued a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on approximating the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards accessibility requirements for certain products and services (the European Accessibility Act). The proposal was adopted in spring 2019, and the implementation of the directive in the Member States will start in summer 2022.

The accessibility requirements also include taking linguistic rights into account. Section 17 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999) contains a provision on the right to one's language and culture. According to the Constitution, the national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. The right of everyone to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts of law and other authorities, and to receive official documents in that language, shall be guaranteed by an Act. The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis. According to the Constitution of Finland, the rights of persons using sign language and of persons in need of interpretation or translation aid owing to disability shall be guaranteed by an Act (Section 17.3).

The legislation in different administrative branches lays down provisions on language rights, including the right to interpretation. For instance, the Act on Interpretation Services for Persons with Disabilities (133/2010) contains provisions on the right of a person with disabilities living in Finland to an interpretation service arranged by Kela. The purpose of the Sign Language Act (359/2015) is to promote the linguistic rights of sign language users. According to the Sign Language Act, the authorities must promote in their activities the opportunities of sign language users to use their own language and obtain information in their own language. According to the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), the authorities must use language that is clear, easy to understand and to the point.

## 4.4.2 Process indicators

One of the housing policy objectives stated in the Government Programme is improving the quality of construction by reforming the Land Use and Building Act. The objective is finalising the parliamentary preparation of the reform of the Land Use and Building Act during the term of government. Taking into account the social sustainability of community structures in the reform is also important.

The Government Programme notes that the development of the suburbs in Finland's largest cities will be continued under a programme on suburbs to be implemented in 2020–2022. The aim is at comprehensive and long-term positive development of housing estates that will promote residents' wellbeing and increase the vitality of neighbourhoods.

The Sustainable City programme promotes the sustainable development of cities and municipalities at the level of both practical urban development and strategic management. The main themes of the programme are low-carbon, smart, healthy and socially sustainability cities.

As part of the new programme on ageing for the term of government, the Government will implement a separate action plan on housing for older people. Among other things, the action plan will promote accessibility and safety by offering grants for installing lifts and improving the accessibility of housing, and assist municipalities and communities with renovating their existing ARA housing stocks to meet the needs of older people.

The aim of the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) reform, which will be implemented in 2018–2021, is to simplify the land use planning process, develop the guidance of construction, support citizens' possibilities to influence planning and decision-making concerning their living environment, and ensure that the wording of the Act will be clear and consistent. While the legislative reform is still in the drafting stage (November 2020), one of the preliminary qualitative objectives of planning will be ensuring a well-functioning urban structure and the accessibility of services, jobs and areas for spending leisure time.

The Government Programme of Prime Minister Marin contains the objective of improving the accessibility of digital services. Special attention will be paid to the language used by the authorities. In line with the Government Programme, an

action plan for promoting digital services has been launched, the themes of which include digital support and accessibility.

Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme also states that the central objectives of the health and social services reform will be to reduce inequalities in health and wellbeing, safeguard equal and quality health and social services for all, improve the availability and accessibility of services, ensure the availability of skilled labour, respond to the challenges of changes in society, and curb the growth of costs.

Basic-level health and social services will be provided close to people by investing in digital service channels and accessibility. Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme additionally states that as part of the social security reform, digitalisation will be used to clarify the system and make it easier to understand. The Government Programme further notes that the realisation of linguistic rights and accessibility will be ensured.

The Social welfare and health centre of the future programme launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health promotes the Government's goal of accessible social and health services. In the allocation of discretionary government transfers granted in connection with the programme, accessibility has been taken into account as one of the criteria. The guide intended for counties applying for these transfers notes that the county must plan its operating models and local service points, digital services and any services it intends to centralise so that they meet the needs of the population, ensuring the accessibility and availability of primary level services. The programme also emphasises the inclusion and participation of clients and patients in the development and evaluation of services. This is seen as particularly important in order to ensure equal availability, accessibility and timeliness of the services. The programme also stresses the importance of providing advice and guidance to clients with integrated service needs.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has drawn up an action programme titled Making digital transport and communication services accessible for 2017–2021. The programme proposes measures for the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which today comprises the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom), the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency and the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority. The

purpose of these measures is mainstreaming digital transport and communication services, improving the definition and availability of accessibility information and increasing awareness among providers of mobility services, making daily life easier for those not yet able to use digital services, and targeting research at accessibility of digital services. The programme also puts emphasis on the importance of clarifying legislation and updating guidelines.

An interim report on the programme published in February 2020 indicates that its implementation is well under way. The objective of the programme is to make digital services as accessible as possible and easily usable for as many people as possible, thus promoting equality between citizens. In the area legislation, for example, the action programme has influenced the pending reform of the Act on the Provision of Digital Services. During the term of the action programme, government agencies have focused on raising awareness of accessibility and on research and development related to digital services. In the context of recent statutory reports, it could be mentioned that Traficom regularly monitors compliance with the obligation to provide audio description services and captions, among other things, by means of a supervision survey.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications is drafting an amendment to the Act on the Provision of Digital Services (917/2014). The government proposal was submitted to the Parliament in autumn 2020. This amendment will bring into force at the national level the new obligations of the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS Directive) and the requirements of the European Electronic Communications Code, or the so-called Telecommunications Directive.

The AVMS Directive obliges the Member States to ensure that the services of media service providers are constantly and gradually made more accessible to persons with disabilities by taking proportionate measures. The proposal aims to extend the accessibility obligations applicable to audiovisual media services (currently, conventional television services) to certain on-demand streaming services. At this stage, the obligation to provide an audio description and captions would apply to programmes to which accessibility obligations already apply in linear television. The audio description and caption services should cover 30% of the programmes available as an on-demand service.

Taking into account the obligation of gradually implementing accessibility according to the AVMS Directive, the 30% coverage proposed for on-demand services is considered proportionate and adequate for operators and consumers, given that the obligation did not previously apply to on-demand services. Compliance with this obligation will be monitored by means of reports on the implementation of accessibility submitted by media service providers to the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency. Media service providers must also submit to the Agency action plans for accessibility in which they set out how they will continuously and gradually make their services more accessible. The obligations of submitting reports and action plans to the Agency apply to all media service providers, including those who are under no obligation to provide audio descriptions and captions. The reporting obligations make it possible to regularly monitor compliance with the accessibility obligations and to assess the adequacy of the obligation to provide captions at the quantitative level. These obligations will additionally enable intervention in shortcomings and the assessment of needs for regulatory changes at a later stage.

The Ministry of Finance is working on a digital identity project, which also involves electronic identification. One of its objectives is to ensure equality in digital verification of identity in various services and especially in the authorities' digital services.

As a requirement stemming from national needs, an obligation related to the quality of captions is also proposed to promote the understandability of programme contents. Extending the obligation to provide audio descriptions and captions in audiovisual services to on-demand services as well as the requirement concerning the quality of captions and the obligations related to accessibility reporting will improve the accessibility of media services and thus freedom of expression.

The proposal would also improve the accessibility of telecommunications service use (telephone and broadband subscriptions), for example through an obligation to publish accessible contract information. With regard to universal broadband services, a government decree would be issued on the special needs of persons with disabilities regarding universal telephone and broadband services. Among other things, the decree would contain provisions on a connection of consistent quality that would enable interpretation services and a right to accessible use

of the services necessary for managing the customer relationship related to the subscription. This proposal can be considered to promote the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The ESOK network of higher education institutions and the OHO! development project funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (on improving ability to study, well-being and inclusion in higher education institutions) promotes the accessibility of studying and creates optimal conditions for it ([www.esok.fi](http://www.esok.fi) and [www.ohoprojek.fi](http://www.ohoprojek.fi)).

With the support of the sub-project on accessibility (ESA) of the DigiCampus learning environment, established and exemplary practices and operating models for ensuring accessibility and mechanisms for continuous evaluation of practices will be created in connection with DigiCampus.

In the administrative sector of the Ministry of the Interior, attention will be paid to accessibility in the construction of new fire stations. In the accessibility of websites and safety communications, the obligations will be taken into account when developing digital services and materials, for example. The effectiveness objectives of the Action plan for incident prevention in the rescue services include that electronic services should cover all population groups by 2024.

The aim of Finland's Management strategy for state properties and facilities located abroad 2019–2030 (20 September 2019, Ministry for Foreign Affairs) is to ensure that the premises are safe and healthy. On these grounds, the accessibility of the facilities plays an important role from the perspective of both the employees and customers of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Efforts have been made to bring accessibility to the level required in Finland, taking the accessibility requirements of the host country authorities and any local fire safety and building protection requirements into account. These requirements are always reconciled on a case-by-case basis, and the workers and customers of the missions are informed of any shortcomings in accessibility and solutions that compensate for them, such as the availability of accessible toilets on an upper floor of the office building.

The aim of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Estate and Procurement Services Unit is to, together with the foreign missions, to produce a centralised examination of the accessibility situation of all premises and to assess the need to add this information to the missions' websites to inform their customers.

### 4.4.3 Outcome indicators

In their current form, the Accessibility Decree and the Non-Discrimination Act are not adequate to meet all the UNCRPD requirements regarding accessibility in the built environment. Reasonable accommodations are not intended to replace basic accessibility solutions, and the Accessibility Decree only applies to construction projects subject to a permit, and thus only a part of the built environment.

The UNCRPD and the Accessibility Decree contribute to promoting the status and rights of persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman stated in her Government Programme objectives for 2019–2023 that inaccessibility in the existing built environment remains a significant problem in Finland. The Government Decree on the accessibility of buildings is inevitably general in nature, and the minimum requirements do not always guarantee equal access for all users. While basic solutions for accessible mobility are implemented in new buildings, room for improvement remains in the accessibility of the visual and audio environment.

The practical application of the Accessibility Decree depends on municipal building supervision authorities. They must have expertise related to the significance of accessibility and understand the impacts of its application in practice. In some municipalities, the Disability Council is asked to give a statement on accessibility in connection with the building permit process of significant projects.

The current housing stock in Finland continues to be rather inaccessible. One of the greatest challenges in old blocks of flats is that they have no lifts, or the lifts are very small. A study completed in 2016 looked at what type of information is available on the location of buildings that have and do not have lifts and where this information can be found. An estimate based on the buildings' construction year indicates that approximately 15% of the current units are accessible.

As the population ages, the need for accessible housing will increase further. There is a need to provide more accessible housing, not merely in new buildings but also through repairs. In this respect, government grants for home renovations are important. Renovation advice is also needed.

In 2019, a total of EUR 25.7 million of appropriations were spent on renovation grants (grants for renovating the homes of older persons and persons with disabilities, grants for lifts and accessibility grants). The number of beneficiaries,



comprising individuals, housing companies and real estate companies, was 1,205. The number of retro-fitted lifts was 118.

Accessibility is poor in many public buildings, such as old Border Guard stations, and barrier-free mobility cannot be offered. If necessary, border checks can be carried out in vehicles, and an assistant and writing can be used to support communication. One challenge in the implementation of accessibility is the division of responsibility between different actors (Border Guard, ELY Centre, Senate Properties, Customs).

Over the years, a great deal of research has been conducted in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications on realising the rights of persons with disabilities, both nationally and internationally. As examples of recent Finnish studies should be mentioned the research reports published by Traficom in 2019 titled 'Internet of Things and smart environments as enablers of accessible mobility services' and 'Preliminary report on the accessibility of automated road vehicles and transport services'. These reports are related to the action programme Making digital transport and communication services accessible. In the context of recent statutory reports, it could be mentioned that Traficom regularly monitors compliance with the obligation to provide audio description services and captions, among other things, by means of a supervision survey.

Nevertheless, shortcomings continue to affect the realisation of language rights. For instance, while the authorities must promote the opportunities of sign language users for using and obtaining information in their language, this is not always achieved in practice.

In their statements given in spring 2020, disability organisations stressed the fundamental importance of accessibility in enabling persons with disabilities to operate as full members of society. The organisations said that developing and improving the accessibility of digital services is particularly important. In a survey conducted by VANE in 2017, accessibility was similarly seen as a prerequisite for effective agency, and taking accessibility into account in digital services was also stressed in this survey.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

#### 4.4.4 Fostering accessibility: measures and objectives

**Objective:**

Ensuring that the obligations laid down in the UNCRPD are taken into account appropriately when drafting and implementing legislation.

**Measures:**

25. Creating an appropriate legislative framework for identified and future needs for accessibility legislation in connection with the drafting process.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*

26. Assessing the interoperability and coverage of accessibility legislation in the administrative branches of different ministries from the perspective of the obligations of the UNCRPD.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objectives:**

Promoting the equality of persons with disabilities in the ministries' work.

Taking the perspective of equality into account when organising the ministries' events, both the accessibility of information and the accessibility of events.

**Measures:**

27. Providing information on the accessibility of meeting facilities on the Senaattila web service.

28. Providing information on the accessibility of facilities on the ministries' websites and recruitment advertisements.

29. Providing information on the accessibility of facilities at events organised by the ministries. Training staff to provide information on accessibility at events.

30. When organising events, ensuring that attention is paid to accessibility and treatment that is as equal as possible, both on government premises and when organising events in rented facilities.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*

**Objective:**

In interpretation services, giving the client a wider choice between service providers and supporting the smooth provision of the services.

31. Measure:

Making the necessary operative changes and/or amendments to the Act on Interpreting Services, ensuring that procurements according to the Act can be made with a client-friendly approach, appropriately and economically.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Promoting access to digital services, enabling as many persons with disabilities as possible to use websites independently.

**Measures:**

32. Promoting the accessibility of public websites and mobile applications by means of information activities, guidance and advice as well as supervision.

33. Appointing an accessibility representative in each ministry.

34. Including the eOppiva material on accessibility in the ministries' induction programmes.

35. Ensuring that all ministries' websites have an accessibility statement and a possibility of giving feedback.

*Responsible bodies: All ministries*

**Objective:**

Developing an accessible digital identity card.

**Measure:**

36. In cooperation with disability organisations, investigating new methods of implementing digital identification in an accessible manner.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Finance*

**Objectives:**

Promoting design for all and the accessibility of the building stock and living environments through knowledge-based management and development activities.

Supporting the work of building supervision authorities to ensure that they can exert influence through knowledge-based management and by disseminating good practices.

**Measures:**

37. Participating in the organisation of training events on accessibility and the Accessibility Decree through cooperation networks.

38. Highlighting the importance of accessible construction in communication related to the Accessibility Decree, among other things by using the Accessibility Decree guidelines and the Accessible building and environment planning guide.

39. Raising awareness and complementing the knowledge base related to the significance of design for all and accessible construction in new buildings, renovations and as part of systematic property management by sharing information with residents, owners and housing companies as well as property management professionals on the Korjaustieto website, which can be accessed through Ymparisto.fi, the shared website of the environmental administration.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Monitoring the application of the Accessibility Decree.

**Measures:**

40. Monitoring UNCRPD implementation in the enforcement of the Accessibility Decree.

41. Investigating how the exemption in the Accessibility Decree regarding toilet and washing facilities in student and youth accommodation is applied.

42. Organising a regular discussion event on the Accessibility Decree for disability organisations.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Continuing the development work initiated by the Prime Minister's Office, which aims to ensure the accessibility of government premises and services and equal opportunities for participation.

**Measure:**

43. Coordinating the measures aiming to develop accessibility on government premises. Conducting accessibility reviews and surveys (in connection with planning renovations) in cooperation with Senate Properties, and examining and developing accessibility in the government's facilities concept.

*Responsible body: Prime Minister's Office in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Developing the Sign Language Act.

**Measures:**

44. Launching a project to assess the needs to develop the Sign Language Act.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

## 4.5 Safety and emergency situations

### *(Article 11 of the UNCRPD)*

States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. This obligation also covers situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

#### 4.5.1 Structural indicators

The general principles laid down in the legislation, including the principle of proportionality, oblige the Border Guard, the rescue services and the police in the administrative branch of the Ministry of the Interior. Any actions must be justifiable in proportion to the importance, level of risk and urgency of the mission, the objective pursued, the behaviour, age, state of health and other similar aspects of the person subjected to the measure as well as other factors affecting the overall assessment of the situation. A precondition for this is that the authorities are aware of the different population groups' needs.

The National Police Board and the Border Guard have adopted codes of ethics. The values of the rescue services, or 'humanely, professionally and reliably', are underpinned by a strongly ethical approach. Ethics is one of the hallmarks of good governance, and the purpose of a code of ethics is to reinforce public confidence in the authorities. Equal and non-discriminatory treatment should be part of the basic code of conduct of all safety authorities.

Section 18 of the Rescue Act (379/2011) contains a provision on evacuation safety in care institutions and in service and supported housing. According to this section, operators shall, by using reports and plans drawn up in advance and by taking measures based on them, ensure that the residents and the persons being treated are, in the event of a fire or other dangerous situation, able to leave the building safely, either on their own or with assistance. 'Operator' means the municipality or other body governed by public law that is responsible for the maintenance of a care institution and for the organisation of service and supported housing and a company or other organisation that operates under an agreement with a municipality or other body governed by public law. Compliance

with the requirements of the Act is supervised by means of fire inspections and documentary checks carried out by the rescue authorities.

According to section 19 of the Rescue Act (379 / 2011), the operator shall draw up an evacuation safety report describing the manner in which the building or spaces are used or how the limited, weakened or varying functional capacity of persons and other factors affecting evacuation safety are taken into account when preparations are made for fires and other dangerous situations and in evacuation arrangements.

### 4.5.2 Process indicators

The housing arrangements of persons with disabilities are taken into account in the rescue services' supervisory activities and cooperation with social welfare and health care actors. New operating models are being developed to address better the issues of people with reduced functional capacity. For example, the objective of three projects included in the Living at home safely concept of the Southern Karelia Rescue Department and South Karelia Social and Health Care District (Eksote) is to identify and manage the safety risks of living at home as early as possible. The aim of this concept implemented in broad-based cooperation is to establish a network of actors with clear responsibilities and to ensure the equal status of people using the services provided by different actors. An effort will also be made to spread this operating model to the districts of other rescue services.

In their preventive work, the police take persons with disabilities into account as potential victims of scams and are making an effort to raise awareness of such offences among this group (through disability organisations, among other things). The police have special expertise regarding discrimination against persons with disabilities, and they attend mandatory non-discrimination training. This training was prepared as part of the Facts against Hate project, and it also pays attention to persons with disabilities.

In addition to interpreters, alternative methods of communication, including writing down questions and answers, are used in police interviews. Problems inherent in these situations are also identified, such as the challenges associated with interpretation into different language groups and possible shortcomings

in the person's literacy skills. The activities are assessed case by case, and the solution models are tailored to each situation. If necessary, partner authorities and stakeholders with special expertise are asked for assistance.

The rescue services' Action plan for preventing incidents is structured around eight impact targets, in which ensuring the safety of persons with disabilities has a high profile. The following are examples of the impact targets: people become more capable of dealing with everyday safety matters, fire deaths and incidents among persons with limited functional capacity will start declining by the year 2024, rescue departments will introduce digital services for all population groups by the year 2022, parties providing home care services will become active safety advocates by 2025, the needs of different customer groups will be systematically identified, and rescue services will provide needs-based services on the basis of uniform criteria. Stronger identification with communities, which will enhance the sense of caring, is also one of the targets.

Mutual Trust, a joint project between disability organisations, the rescue authorities and transport operators that ended in 2019, helped to map the rescue authorities' preparedness for rescuing persons with disabilities and contributed to the development of know-how and understanding related to such rescues.

The police engage in extensive international and national cooperation in order to develop their work. For example, the Police University College is involved in the BuildERS project, which brings together 17 organisations from Europe, the United States and Indonesia. The project seeks methods and tools for strengthening the crisis resilience of citizens, communities and society as a whole, starting with the most vulnerable groups. The European Union finances this research and innovation project titled Building European Communities' Resilience and Social Capital (BuildERS) under the Horizon 2020 programme. In addition, the Police University College works together with such organisations as the Autism Foundation Finland with a view to producing teaching material relevant to encountering people on the autism spectrum in police work.

The accessibility of emergency calls has been improved, and it is now possible to send an emergency message using a text message or the 112 application.



### 4.5.3 Outcome indicators

As regards research evidence and statistical data concerning the administrative branch of the Ministry of the Interior, publicly accessible data can be drawn on. The Finnish Border Guard has not itself produced research or statistical data in which disability would be one of the disaggregation criteria. Underpinned by knowledge-based management, the rescue services are continuously striving to develop their capability to take special groups into account, for example by means of fire investigations and analysing the data in the accident statistics system (PRONTO). The Police University College has published a review of hate crime reported to the police in Finland in 2020. The Ministry of the Interior has identified a need to produce more information on the special safety requirements of persons with disabilities.

Disability organisations consider it important that persons with disabilities are taken into account in the prevention and anticipation of hazardous situations, however without unduly restricting their independence. Disability organisations have pointed out that persons with disabilities have encountered difficulties related to housing safety, for example when it comes to the maintenance and reliability of fire alarms. For persons with physical disabilities, winters with heavy snows cause hazardous situations for several days on end, as housing companies are not always able to clear rescue roads very quickly or keep them clear. The escape hatches in high-rise buildings are impossible for people with physical disabilities to use.

### 4.5.4 Ensuring safety and preventing emergency situations: objectives and measures

#### **Objective:**

Building a common situational picture of different population groups' needs related to safety and safety skills. Mapping the needs, taking into account equality in different administrative branches' activities.

#### **Measures:**

45. Taking the rights of persons with disabilities into account in, among other things, the preparation of impact targets in the rescue

services' action plan for incident prevention and addressing the special features related to rescuing persons with disabilities in the training and practices of the rescue services. Safety skills are a matter that concerns the entire internal affairs administration. The efforts to raise awareness will go in two directions: building up the safety skills of all population groups and, on the other hand, providing information on the population groups' needs to the authorities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objective:**

Emphasising the needs of persons with disabilities in the rescue services' action plan for incident prevention.

**Measure:**

46. Producing human-centric safety training that meets the needs of different population groups.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objectives:**

Strengthening people's ownership of safety and the safety of living at home.

**Measure:**

47. Strong involvement of the rescue services in the project package titled Living at home safely, the aim of which is to set up a genuinely effective network and concept for improving the safety of homes.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objectives:**

Raising awareness of persons with disabilities as victims of crime. Also taking the non-discrimination of persons with disabilities into consideration in criminal processes.

**Measures:**

48. Using the Government Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings prepared in 2020 in the stakeholders' activities. Raising awareness of the position of persons with disabilities as potential victims of human trafficking and knowing how to take this into account in the work of different stakeholders, for example in crime prevention. Providing personnel with training related to identifying particularly vulnerable persons as potential victims of crime, encountering them and addressing their special needs, for example in interviews.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objective:**

Using reasonable accommodations in official activities that focus on persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

49. In the context of the Rescue Act reform scheduled for the current government term, examining the implementation of the reasonable accommodation principles in legislation on rescue services to ensure that the human dignity of persons with disabilities is guaranteed in encounters.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

## 4.6 Independent living and inclusion

### *(Articles 12, 14, 19 and 29 of the UNCRPD)*

Persons with disabilities must have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of services necessary to support living and inclusion in the community. Such services include residential services

and personal assistance. Community services for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities. Independent living must be supported with specialised services, support measures and accommodations. Persons with disabilities must be able to effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others.

#### 4.6.1 Structural indicators

Currently, services for persons with disabilities are mainly organised according to the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014), the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (380/1987) and the Act on Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977). Legislation related to the client process and organisation of services also includes the Act on Client Charges in Healthcare and Social Welfare (734/1992) and the Acts on the Status and Rights of Patients and Clients (785/1992, 812/2000).

Essential aspects relevant to the independent life of persons with disabilities include the right to self-determination and safety issues, which are discussed in sections 5.2 and 5.5 of this Action Plan above.

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) has granted investment subsidies for the housing projects of special groups since 2005. They are regulated in the Act on Subsidies for Improving the Housing Conditions of Special Groups (1281/2004). The purpose of the subsidies is to increase the supply of affordable rental housing suitable for the housing needs of persons belonging to special groups. The subsidy can only be granted together with an interest subsidy loan approved by ARA, which means that housing projects for special groups are also eligible for a state interest subsidy and a guarantee.

#### 4.6.2 Process indicators

Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme notes that a reform of the Act on Disability Services and Assistance will ensure better consideration of individual needs of persons with disabilities. Personal budgets for persons with intellectual disabilities will be piloted at the same time. The needs for legislative amendments

will be evaluated in connection with these experiments. Disability services will be secured for Swedish speakers.

The Government Programme also states that the diverse housing needs of different age groups and population groups will be taken into account. Sufficient state support for housing for special groups will be ensured, and communal housing will be developed.

The Government will complete the dismantling of inpatient care for persons with intellectual disabilities and enable young people and adults with intellectual disabilities and on the autism spectrum to become independent by supporting them in finding housing to suit their individual needs and by building housing for people with special needs in ordinary residential areas.

Further preparation of the disability service legislation overhaul was initiated in early 2020 by the so-called inclusion working group appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The appointment of the working group was also a response to a resolution adopted by Parliament that was issued in connection with the parliamentary debate on disability organisations' citizens' initiative 'Not for sale'. The working group's task is to prepare legislative proposals on the inclusion of persons with disabilities for the legislation on disability services as well as legal remedies related to choice in the manner in which services are provided. Other issues that must be taken into account in the further preparation of the reform include the pending health and social services reform, links to the overhaul of the legislation on self-determination (new acts on the status of clients and patients) and reforms concerning the inclusion of persons with disabilities in working life. The aim is that the new legislation on disability services will enter into force at the same time as the health and social services reform in 2023.

A national training programme on the organisation and procurement of disability services, which was funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and coordinated by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, was implemented in 2019. In total, around 1,000 people participated in this training. The project was planned and implemented and its impacts are being monitored in broad-based cooperation with such stakeholders as the disability organisations, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and municipalities.

ARA has completed development projects related to individual housing solutions for persons with intellectual disabilities. In 2017–2019, ARA collaborated with NGOs, municipalities and joint municipal authorities on a project titled Kotimatkalla ('Going home'), which developed housing and neighbourhood networks that enable young people in need of special support to live in ordinary flats. The objective of these networks is to provide residents with personally tailored support in their homes, in addition to which residents participating in the network provide peer support to each other. It is essential that the residents use their local services and are part of their local community.

### 4.6.3 Outcome indicators

Adequate and high-quality services are an essential element of independent living. While the number of people receiving housing services and personal assistance, in particular, has increased continuously at the national level, there are significant differences in the availability, organisation and quality of various special services for persons with disabilities depending on where they live. An overhaul of the disability services legislation has now been under preparation during several government terms.

Separate acts hamper the realisation of equal services for persons with disabilities in different ways. More attention should be paid to the personal opinions and preferences as well as the individual needs for assistance and life situations of persons with disabilities when assessing their need for services, and planning, making decisions on and providing services.

At the hearing held in spring 2020, several disability organisations emphasised the priority of dismantling institutional living. Investing in individual housing solutions and systematically monitoring the functional capacity of people transferred from an institution to independent and supported housing were also seen as essential. Additionally, imposing a duty to make reasonable accommodations related to housing on housing companies was considered important in terms of equality. In

a survey conducted by VANE in 2017, sufficiently individualised housing solutions were also seen as important for enabling independent living.<sup>6</sup>

Finland has set the aim of ensuring that by 2020, no one will live in institutions for the intellectually disabled. At the end of 2018, 521 people remained in long-term institutional care, and this figure was 452 at the end of 2019. Institutional care for persons with intellectual disabilities can be ended and housing and services that meet their individual needs can be achieved by introducing more versatile ways of arranging and procuring housing and services. The reform of the disability services legislation can contribute to supporting this development.

Studies and national monitoring findings indicate that lack of choice remains a factor in housing for people with intellectual disabilities, which is predominated by group homes. According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's Sotkanet website, at the end of 2018 there were more than 8,000 places in group homes where staff are available 24 hours a day. The relative share of guided and supported housing in the total volume has remained unchanged in recent years. The emphasis in housing service types has been similar for the last 10 years. In ARA's development projects, it has been estimated that a large proportion of people living in group homes would manage in their own homes with support.

In 2019, a total of 120 housing units were produced for people with intellectual disabilities with ARA's support, and subsidies amounting to EUR 10.9 million were allocated to them.

Still more housing is needed for persons with intellectual disabilities who come from institutions and move out of their childhood homes. Some persons with disabilities who live in group homes would like to live independently. This is why more individual, needs-based housing solutions are needed. In addition to ordinary rental housing, flat groups and housing networks with support and service points are needed.

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6 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

## 4.6.4 Fostering independent living and inclusion: objectives and measures

### **Objectives:**

Realising the equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society regardless of the nature of the disability, supporting their participation in decision-making related to their lives and securing them services that meet their individual needs.

### **Measures:**

50. Overhauling the disability services legislation, ensuring that the obligations of the UNCRPD are taken into account in the new legislation and its implementation. Supporting the implementation of the new legislation by updating the relevant section in the Online Handbook on Disability Services maintained by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare*

### **Objective:**

Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the organisation of services that support independent living.

### **Measures:**

51. Developing, collecting and disseminating good practices related to organising and procuring housing and services for persons with disabilities.

52. Implementing a pilot project on personal budgeting and preparing a proposal for a Finnish personal budgeting model in disability services.

*Responsible bodies: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Environment, ARA, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Finance*



**Objective:**

Taking the special features of the Sámi culture into account when assessing the needs for assistance and support of Sámi persons with disabilities and when planning services.

**Measure:**

53. Improving the availability of tools for Sámi-language social work focusing on persons with disabilities (including expanding the Sámi-language material in the Online Handbook on Disability Services).

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare*

**Objectives:**

Safeguarding the availability of renovation grants (grants for repairs in the homes of older people and persons with disabilities, grants for removing mobility barriers and retrofitting lifts) and promoting the installation of lifts in the existing housing stock.

**Measures:**

- 54. More effective communication about renovation grants.
- 55. Supporting local working groups planning the retrofitting of lifts and other cooperation.
- 56. Sharing information about the construction of retrofitted lifts, including on the website [hissiin.fi](http://hissiin.fi).

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment and ARA*

**Objective:**

Guiding state-supported housing production for persons with disabilities in an individual and diverse direction.

**Measure:**

- 57. Contributing to ensuring that housing production intended for persons with disabilities facilitates housing in line with the UNCRPD

(a sufficient range of housing options meeting the needs of persons with disabilities is available, especially as part of the standard housing stock).

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Drawing on the findings of equality studies to improve the housing conditions of persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

58. Using ARA's renovation grants and investment subsidies to provide housing for persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality in housing for persons with disabilities

**Measure:**

59. In connection with the next property tax reform, preparing a change concerning housing services for persons with disabilities and other population groups, bringing the property tax in line with taxes on permanent residence.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Finance in cooperation with Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

## 4.7 Movement and mobility (Articles 9, 18 and 20 of the UNCRPD)

Persons with disabilities must have an opportunity for the liberty of movement. Persons with disabilities are entitled to personal mobility with the greatest possible independence. The personal mobility of persons with disabilities must be facilitated in the manner and at the time of their choice and by providing them with the necessary reasonable assistance and support. Safeguarding accessible transportation and accessible information about the services is also important.

### 4.7.1 Structural indicators

The overhaul of the transport services legislation, which entered fully into force in 2018, has relevance to the mobility of persons with disabilities. Taxi services are also regulated in the new Act on Transport Services (320/2017). This Act is part of Finland's national legislation. According to the Act on Transport Services, the holder of a taxi transport licence shall make sure the driver ensures that the passengers can board and alight safely and offers the passengers any assistance that may be required, that the driver has sufficient interaction and language skills as well as local knowledge of the main operating area, and that the driver has the ability to take into consideration any special needs arising from a passenger's restricted functional capacity. Compliance with the Act is supervised by the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom.

An amendment to the Act is currently pending. The objectives of the amendment include adding detail to the provisions on the taxi driver's examination and its organisation; additionally, taxi drivers could participate in voluntary driver training in which the needs of persons with disabilities are taken particularly into account. Contracting entities could add this training to their requirements in competitive tendering processes. Taxi entrepreneurs should complete intensive entrepreneurial training and take an entrepreneur examination. The training programmes specified in the Act and the entrepreneur examination would be organised by training organisations approved by the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency. However, the quality of taxi services experienced by persons with disabilities depends to a great extent on how competent the municipalities' social welfare and health care services are in arranging transport services according to the Act on

Disability Services and Assistance, for example, and subjecting them to competitive tendering. The quality of taxi services paid for by Kela according to the Health Insurance Act and, for example, maintaining a system of taxi drivers known to their clients are largely matters for Kela's internal decisions.

According to the current legislation transport service providers, bus and taxi entrepreneurs alike, have an obligation to ensure that passengers have access to essential information about the services and accessible fleet. There are separate provisions on the technical requirements for accessible vehicles. In taxi services, vehicles of this type will also be eligible for tax relief in the future.

EU directives on the rights of passengers contain, in particular, regulations on providing assistance for persons with disabilities. The scope of these rights varies between different modes of transport, however. For example, no provisions on staff training have so far been included in the Regulation on rail passengers' rights and obligations.

While accessibility in public transport is being developed constantly, persons with disabilities still need special services to support their mobility. Currently, transport services for persons with disabilities are organised according to the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014), the Act on Disability Services and Assistance (380/1987) and the Act on Intellectual Disabilities (519/1977).

## 4.7.2 Process indicators

The Government Programme includes the following objectives: *"In terms of taxi transport, the necessary amendments will be made with due consideration to the safety of the operations. In the new situation, steps will be taken to find solutions for the problems that have emerged (for example transparency of pricing and availability of taxis). The rules of competitive tendering for taxi transport services paid by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland call for reassessment."* The provisions on taxi services in the Act on Transport Services and the needs to amend them are thus under review.

An amendment to the Regulation on rail passengers' rights is currently pending. During the Finnish Presidency, a common position of the Council was reached

on these amendments. Their aim is to improve the rights of passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility by such means as further requirements regarding the accessibility of passenger information and also bringing in requirements concerning staff competence in this mode of transport. The amendment additionally aims to ensure that passenger rights will be consistent with the changes that have occurred in the operating environment and EU legislation as the railway market has been opened for competition.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications is working with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of the Environment to examine the problems that persons with disabilities have encountered when using a disabled parking permit in areas covered by private parking supervision and the most effective means of addressing these problems.

For a number of years, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has striven to take into account the perspective of older people and persons with restricted functional capacity in the preparation of different projects by organising various hearings and requesting statements from NGOs or their umbrella organisations. Representatives of disability organisations and other stakeholders have also been invited to join the ministry's transport and communications divisions, which discuss the EU's legislative projects.

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) also strives to take accessibility issues into account in its daily work. Stakeholders with the most urgent needs for accessible mobility and communication have been met during the Action Plan period.

The National Transport System Plan (Transport 12) has been under preparation in Parliament and in interactive cooperation with stakeholders since June 2019. The goal of this 12-year plan is to develop the transport system throughout Finland over a longer term. A draft of the Transport 12 plan was completed in autumn 2020, and the draft plan and the results of its impact assessment will be circulated for comments in early 2021.

The plan addresses accessibility from the perspective of the national transport system, taking into account an accessible environment, accessible transport fleet and digital accessibility alike. According to this draft, the Government would work

together with other stakeholders to define a goal state for the accessibility of the transport system and digital services for transport, identifying the roles of the parties responsible for the system in terms of both the effectiveness of different legs of the travel chain and the realisation of passengers' rights. On this basis, the government in cooperation with other stakeholders would define nationally significant connections on which the aim would be at high-standard accessible travel chains following the *design for all* principle, and the availability of digital accessibility information would also be ensured. The measure comprises various pilot projects for accessible travel chains.

### 4.7.3 Outcome indicators

Key studies in this area have included EU-funded COST projects related to the accessibility of long-distance bus services, low-floor buses and accessible rail transport, and ELSA, a research and development programme on accessible transport.

The COST projects engage in multidisciplinary and open research supported by the EU and carried out following the *bottom-up* principle on the initiative of the Member States. The completed COST projects have had a significant background impact, particularly regarding technical legislation in the EU. The projects are relevant to such acts as the bus and coach directive, the EU regulation on public passenger services and the directive on the training of drivers.

The national research and development programme on accessible mobility (ELSA) implemented the Ministry of Transport and Communications' accessibility strategy in 2003–2006. The programme funded many research and development projects, theses and training material packages for public transport personnel and planners. The programme activities also included coordinating the work of the Esteetön kunta ('Accessible municipality') network and organising several training events and seminars. The programme was not only influential at the strategy and programme level but also produced new guidelines, planning practices, services and products for practical planning and construction work and customer service.

Accessibility issues are also present in the daily work of the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency. The Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency works together

with NGOs and has, among other things, participated in seminars and workshops as an expert in accessible transport infrastructure.

At the hearing of spring 2020, many disability organisations stressed independent mobility and freedom of movement as fundamental preconditions for the equality of persons with disabilities. According to organisations, the use of taxi services is fraught with significant challenges, including the availability and booking of taxis, arrival and communication with the driver. The organisations emphasised the necessity of taking the needs of people with different mobility restrictions into account in mobility services. An accessible mobility environment in public transport was also seen as an important part of developing mobility services.

The survey conducted by VANE in 2017 reported local inequalities experienced in public transport, and public transport was found inaccessible, for example in terms of signage. The number of trips allowed according to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance was also considered insufficient.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.7.4 Fostering the right to independent movement and mobility: objectives and measures

##### **Objective:**

In the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, striving to intensify the existing supervision of taxis to the extent that it concerns the licence holder's obligation referred to in the Act on Transport Services to ensure that the service provided by the driver is appropriate and that the driver is able to take into account the special needs arising from the passenger's restricted functional capacity.

7 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

**Measure:**

60. As part of supervising compliance with the taxi legislation by the authorities, paying special attention to the licence holder's obligations to ensure the drivers' professional skills related to meeting the special needs of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications*

**Objective:**

In the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, striving to promote efforts to improve taxi drivers' competence and expertise related to assisting and transporting passengers with disabilities safely, especially in transport services organised or paid for by society, including transport services referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance and services reimbursed by Kela.

**Measure:**

61. Promoting taxi drivers' competence and expertise related to assisting persons with disabilities safely, especially in transport services organised and paid for by society.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

As far as possible, the Ministry of Transport and Communications together with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of the Environment will investigate the problems that persons with disabilities have encountered when using a disabled parking permit in areas covered by private parking control and the most effective means of tackling these problems.



**Measure:**

62. Striving to investigate problems related to the use of disabled parking permits in private parking areas and ways in which these problems can be tackled

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Transport and Communications in cooperation with Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Ministry of the Environment.*

## 4.8 Education (Article 24 of the UNCRPD)

Persons with disabilities are entitled to education on an equal basis with others. Persons with disabilities may not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability. Persons with disabilities must be able to access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education in the communities in which they live. Reasonable accommodations must be provided for persons with disabilities. They must receive the support required within the general education system.

### 4.8.1 Structural indicators

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for developing Finland's education, science, culture, sports and youth policy and for international cooperation. Work carried out within the ministry's administrative branch has far-reaching effects on people's wellbeing and success. The objective of the ministry is to provide citizens with possibilities for personal development through education and cultural services, to guarantee the skills needed in the labour market, to reinforce the national culture, and to promote international cooperation. The idea that the ministry's administrative branches renew society and generate education and culture lies at the core of the Strategy of the Ministry of Education 2030. The capacity for renewal safeguards well-being and sustainable growth.

According to the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014), all education programmes must allow reasonable accommodations needed by persons with disabilities. The legislation on early childhood education and care, education and training also contains provisions which specifically safeguard special support for persons in need of special support and with disabilities and take them into account as part of education. In addition, personalised plans help to address the individual's different needs for guidance and support.

To ensure the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities, the legislation additionally contains provisions on enabling special support, special education or special arrangements to allow them to attend school or complete their education, training or qualifications. In addition, the legislation on integration has a bearing on promoting immigrants' integration in the field of education and culture.

The legislation provides for individuals' rights, and education and training providers' obligations, that enable equal participation in learning and education as well as the provision of assistant services and aids required for attending education. Once they have completed their basic education, the services required by students with disabilities are mainly organised according to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance. To foster the inclusion of pupils and students, there are also provisions on pupil and student bodies as part of the organisation of teaching or education as well as on student welfare, which refers to promoting and maintaining students' learning, good psychological and physical health and social well-being as well as activities that promote the prerequisites for them in the educational institution's community. Student welfare comprises both pupil welfare referred to in the Basic Education Act and student welfare referred to in the General Upper Secondary Schools Act and the Act on Vocational Education and Training. Many different factors affect the accessible implementation of learning and education.

The cross-cutting perspective at the different levels of the Finnish education system is, in keeping with the principles of continuous learning, enabling education for everyone in different stages of life. The legislation on early childhood education and care, basic education, basic education in arts, liberal adult education, general upper secondary education, vocational education and training, and education provided by the universities and universities of applied sciences enables equal participation in education and the reasonable accommodations referred to in the Non-Discrimination Act. The cross-cutting principles of the legislation on education

include accessibility, equality and non-discrimination as well as mainstreaming the inclusion of persons with disabilities and others in need of special support at all levels of education.

According to the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (714/2018), students who struggle to complete their studies due to special linguistic difficulties or other learning difficulties have the right to special needs education and other learning support as required by their individual needs. The teaching staff work together to implement the support measures. Students have a right to support, regardless of the reasons for their learning difficulties. Students may need learning support because of reading and writing difficulties, learning difficulties caused by an illness or disability, or difficulties related to the student's family or other life situation that hamper their studies. Students who have difficulty concentrating or lack study skills may also need support.

In general upper secondary education, special needs education comprises instruction provided in addition to subject teaching which assists a student who, for example, faces challenges arising from having difficulty to concentrate or other learning difficulties and teaches them study techniques, including guidance and exercises related to their problems. Provisions on the eligibility of persons providing special needs education are laid down in the Decree on Qualification Requirements for Teaching Staff (986/1998). Other learning support may include remedial or additional teaching in a specific subject provided alongside other teaching as well as allowing additional time or other similar measures in examinations or other situations related to demonstrating knowledge and skills. In practice, special needs teachers also have a consultative role and they support subject teachers in issues related to the delivery of instruction.

In general upper secondary education, the student's need for support should be assessed at the beginning of the studies and regularly as the studies progress. In the course of the studies, it would be important to monitor the student's learning and, if necessary, make changes in the support measures. At the student's request, the support measures are recorded in their personal study plan. While no medical diagnosis or other medical report is required to access learning support, with the student's consent such reports can be used to assess their need for support. Social workers and psychologists working in student welfare can also be contacted about assessing the need for support.

The legislation contains separate provisions on the student's right to assistance services, special aids and other services required for general upper secondary studies. (See the Act on Disability Services and Assistance 380/1987)

Legislation applicable to higher education (section 37a of the Universities Act 558/2009 and section 26 of the Act on Universities of Applied Sciences 932/2017) stipulates that a matter related to the applicant's state of health or functional capacity may not be an obstacle to admission as a student.

#### 4.8.2 Process indicators

The Ministry of Education and Culture's ongoing projects aiming to reform the legislation on education are based on the objectives of Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme. A government proposal on extending compulsory education is to be brought to Parliament in autumn 2020. Under this proposal, compulsory education would extend to upper secondary education until the student turns 18. This extension of compulsory education would apply equally to all students. As today, the support measures and accommodations intended for students with disabilities would be available for completing compulsory education. A student subject to compulsory education or their guardian could apply for an exemption from compulsory education if a long-term illness or disability prevents its completion, but a person subject to compulsory education would always have a right to study. The reform is set to apply to young people completing their basic education in 2021, one cohort at a time.

In addition to extending compulsory education, the proposal also contains a new act on preparatory education for programmes leading to a qualification. The current transition stage programmes between basic and upper secondary education, or voluntary additional basic education, preparatory education for general upper secondary education and preparatory education for vocational education and training, would be combined to form preparatory education for education leading to a qualification.

The purpose of the new education package would be to provide the students with capabilities for obtaining a place in and completing programmes leading to a qualification and to clarify the students' plans for further studies and careers. The

new system of preparatory education would be intended for both those subject to compulsory education and other persons in need of additional capabilities. The training that prepares students with the most severe disabilities for work and independent life would not change.

The need for support of students with disabilities would also be addressed in the new preparatory education system. The students' right to special support for learning and studying due to learning difficulties, disability, illness or other reasons would be extended to preparatory education organised by a general upper secondary education provider, which would also improve the possibilities of students with disabilities to continue their studies in general upper secondary education after basic education. In addition, the new preparatory education package could be offered to students in need of demanding special support, for whom the preparatory education would be a gateway to transitioning to vocational education and training leading to a qualification aimed for those needing demanding special support. According to the proposal, the new education system would be introduced in autumn 2022.

The extension of compulsory education will also support pupils with disabilities who have completed their basic education in the transition to and completion of upper secondary education. This will raise their competence level, narrow learning gaps and increase educational equality. The objectives of extending compulsory education support the educational equality of persons with disabilities. Free education, different forms of study and support within the compulsory education system, preparatory education for education and training leading to a qualification, and guidance at the transition stage will support the transitions of students with disabilities to upper secondary education in many ways and meet their different needs in education better.

The Government Programme notes, among other things, that the employment of persons with disabilities should be promoted and that they belong to a group that lags behind in educational achievement and skills. This is why an experiment with two-year pre-primary education, stronger support for development and learning and fostering inclusion in early childhood education and care, expanding compulsory education, a reform of continuous learning and the recent Education Policy Report will also promote the aim of increasing the level of educational

achievement and skills of persons with disabilities, narrowing learning gaps and fostering equality in education.

Provisions on the right to learning support and special needs education were included in the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (section 28 of Act 714/2018; HE 41/2018 VP) in order to safeguard the equality of students. The provisions on learning support and special needs education will enter into force in general upper secondary education as the new curricula are introduced on 1 August 2021. Most general upper secondary education providers already offer support and special needs education services to students who have learning difficulties. This special needs education does not correspond to what is laid down in provisions on special needs education in basic education, for example. Due to its nature, compiling detailed statistics on it is challenging. Questions about such themes as the eligibility of staff providing special needs education can be included in surveys addressed to teachers.

In line with Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched development programmes to improve quality and equality in early childhood education and care and basic education for 2020–2022. The projects of this development programme focus on reforming legislation, improving the effectiveness of funding systems for early childhood education and care and basic education, and search for effective practices and operating methods that strengthen equality. The working group is tasked to make proposals for amending the relevant legislation, strengthening the principle of neighbourhood schools and local day-care centres, and improving personnel competence related to support provision in early childhood education and care and in pre-primary and basic education.

In early 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a study on the current state of early childhood education and training delivered in Swedish. The current state of skills and educational opportunities of Swedish-speaking children, young people and adults with disabilities will be examined as part of this work.

A working group titled *Oikeus oppia* ('Right to learn'), which prepares measures aiming to promote learning support, support for children and inclusion in early childhood education and care and pre-primary and basic education, was appointed in May 2020. Its term runs until 30 August 2022.

A development programme titled Oikeus osata ('Right to skills'), which aims to improve the quality and equality of vocational education and training, contributes to ensuring that all students in vocational education and training acquire solid vocational competence and good basic skills for work, life and lifelong learning. The development programme was launched in 2020 and it will end in 2022.

A quality programme will be launched in 2021 to improve the quality of general upper secondary education. The foundation for quality management and development will be strengthened by drafting a quality strategy for general upper secondary education in close cooperation with stakeholders, as well as proposals for measures implementing the strategy that will support the development of quality management required in the general upper secondary school legislation. A network project on building competence in demanding special support based on evidence (TUVET) has produced research evidence and learning materials related to pedagogical solutions for demanding and special support to help develop the initial teacher education and competence development during teachers' careers.

The learning materials are related to research-based pedagogical methods and personalised solutions of demanding special support. The materials and training address such aspects as practising social skills, social haptic communication, dyslexia, guided use of tactile messages, learning difficulties in mathematics, student rights as well as inclusive operating environments and building environments in which the needs of students requiring all types of support can be addressed. A package is being developed on the MOOC platform that can be used to develop teachers' competence during their careers. The TUVET project has organised regional multiprofessional and evidence-based in-service training that supports the activities of the VIP network focusing on demanding special support. Underpinned by research, the expertise of personnel providing demanding special support has been improved. For more information visit: <https://www.tuvet.fi/>.

A development project focusing on the instruction of Finnish sign language mapped sign language teachers' needs for in-service training, and on this basis, in-service training was implemented in three thematic areas: sign language grammar, learning sign language and language assessment, and the community and culture of the deaf (Deaf studies). In addition, the planning of and experiments with open digital teaching materials are under way. The teaching materials draw on the Finnish sign language corpus. Teaching material is also being developed on the

basis of the material produced by a project titled VIKKE, which was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The VIKKE project develops tools for assessing the language proficiency of sign-language children. The corpus-based learning material developed in the project will be published online, where it can be freely used. The objective is to make the in-service training a permanent part of the basic activities of University of Jyväskylä's Sign Language Centre. The Ministry of Education and Culture has funded the Finnish Association of the Deaf's development project that promotes Finnish-Swedish sign language.

### 4.8.3 Outcome indicators

At the hearing organised in spring 2020, many disability organisations stressed the importance of inclusive education, reasonable accommodations and addressing individual needs at all levels of education. The organisations said that experiences of discrimination arise from inadequate teaching arrangements that do not address individual needs comprehensively enough, as well as inadequate support for learning. While inclusive education was considered particularly significant in terms of the social inclusion of children and young people with disabilities, lifelong learning and access to education for persons with disabilities of all ages was also an important theme. Sufficient accommodations in the support measures for teaching were also found preconditions for equal learning in the survey conducted by VANE in 2017.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. p. 44. For online access, [click here](#).



#### 4.8.4 Fostering equal opportunities for education and training: objectives and measures

##### **Objectives:**

Improving education and competence at all levels of education, narrowing learning gaps and increasing equality. Enabling equal opportunities for continuous learning and competence development by comprehensive lifelong guidance services.

##### **Measures:**

- 63. Implementing the extension of compulsory education.
- 64. Implementing a parliamentary reform of continuous learning.
- 65. Promoting learning support in early childhood education and care by developing a model for learning support.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

##### **Objective:**

By extending compulsory education and providing preparatory education for programmes leading to qualifications, promoting the educational equality of students with disabilities in guidance provided in basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training as well as in transitions to education and training leading to qualifications.

##### **Measures:**

- 66. Reforming the legislation on education at the transition stage to meet the needs of different students better.
- 67. Monitoring the impacts of the extension of compulsory education and provision of preparatory education for programmes leading to qualifications on the educational paths of students with disabilities, the effectiveness of the requisite guidance and support measures, and the transition to education and training leading to qualifications and completion of qualifications.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Ensuring that every student completes upper secondary education after basic education.

**Measures:**

68. Enhancing learning support, guidance and student welfare services as well as improving the opportunities of the comprehensive school to provide everyone with sufficient capabilities for completing upper secondary education.

69. Increasing the age of compulsory education to 18. A precondition for extending compulsory education is offering upper secondary education free of charge.

70. Building different forms of studying and support within compulsory education.

As part of extending compulsory education, developing preparatory education programmes for upper secondary education and guidance at the transition point to facilitate the transition to upper secondary education.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessibility, equality and non-discrimination in higher education.

**Measures:**

71. Preparing the accessibility plan for higher education referred to in the Government Programme, which includes a review of how higher education institutions realise equality in terms of social aspects, regions and languages and identifies the obstacles minority groups face when seeking higher education. Preparing a proposal for objectives and policy outlines related to promoting accessibility on the basis of this situation picture.

72. Producing a report on the realisation of equality and non-discrimination in higher education and RDI.

73. Ensuring (by means of performance guidance between the Ministry of Education and Culture and higher education institutions, among other things) that higher education institutions foster equality and non-discrimination in their activities through their statutory equality and non-discrimination plans.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

## 4.9 Health and rehabilitation (Articles 25 and 26 of the CRDP)

Persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. Persons with disabilities must be provided with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable services as provided to other persons. Persons with disabilities are also entitled to the health services that they need specifically because of their disabilities. Health services for persons with disabilities must be provided as close as possible to their own communities, including in rural areas.

Comprehensive rehabilitation services needed by persons with disabilities must be provided, including through peer support, to enable them to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental and social ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.

### 4.9.1 Structural indicators

The Constitution of Finland grants everyone the right to adequate social and health care services. The Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992) states that every person who is permanently resident in Finland is without discrimination entitled to health and medical care required by his or her state of health. The care of the patient has to be arranged so and he/she shall also otherwise be treated so that his/her human dignity is not violated and that his/her conviction and privacy is respected. The mother tongue, individual needs and culture of the patient have

to be taken into account as far as possible in his/her care and other treatment. According to the Health Care Act, the municipality must provide medical care services for the residents in its area.

Provisions on rehabilitation are contained in a number of substance acts, such as the Health Care Act, the Social Welfare Act, the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, the Act on the Rehabilitation Benefits and Rehabilitation Allowances of the Social Insurance Institution, the Employment Pensions Act and several other acts. A national guide on the fundamentals of the delivery of medical rehabilitation aids was published in autumn 2020.

#### 4.9.2 Process indicators

As noted in the Government Programme, the central objectives of the health and social services reform will be to reduce inequalities in health and wellbeing, safeguard equal and quality health and social services for all, and improve the availability and accessibility of services. The reform will transfer the responsibility for organising health and social services to autonomous regions larger than municipalities (counties). In the future, the counties will produce services predominantly as public services. The focus will be shifted towards primary level services and prevention.

The aim of the ongoing project on the social welfare and health centres of the future and the recently launched social security reform is to streamline service processes, strengthen competence and simplify the benefit and service system. The objective of these projects is to strengthen timely referrals to the right services, which will also improve the position of persons with disabilities. Both projects involve reviewing and coordinating numerous acts.

Section 29 of the Health Care Act (1326/2019) on medical rehabilitation should be clarified regarding the content of rehabilitation and assistive device services, and rehabilitation services should be examined in relation to other legislation. As the Health Care Act is reformed, it should be examined as a whole in relation to rehabilitation and other legislation on rehabilitation, such as the Social Welfare Act and the Act on Disability Services and Assistance.

Several proposals of a committee appointed to prepare the reform of the rehabilitation system are also relevant to persons with disabilities.

There are various local-level client forums in the field of health care, as well as operating models in which peer support persons from non-governmental organisations support and advise people with illnesses and disabilities during the treatment and rehabilitation process. Kela has client and partnership forums for rehabilitation matters.

The Government Programme of Prime Minister Marin includes a mental health strategy with a focus on mental health as a resource. It will secure people's mental health rights and mental health services, incorporating them into existing structures, prevent suicides and strengthen the competence of mental health professionals. The legislation on mental health and substance abuse services will be reformed at the same time.

The way for an overhaul of the legislation on mental health and substance abuse services has already been paved in previous years by broad-based consultations of different parties, including non-governmental organisations, experts and authorities, concerning reform needs. As key issues have been considered equal access to care and services and the integration and continuity of services. The participation of experts by experience in the development, implementation and evaluation of services has been considered important. In practice, the provisions of the Act on Disability Services and Assistance have rarely been applied to services provided to mental health rehabilitees. It is important to clarify the conditions under which substance abuse or mental health rehabilitees have the right to the services they need.

### 4.9.3 Outcome indicators

At the hearing of spring 2020, many disability organisations drew attention to discrimination in health care, which is manifested as inappropriate treatment and, for example, categorically limiting access to treatment because of a disability. The organisations would like health care staff to obtain training on the UNCRPD and its binding nature. According to NGOs, the participation of persons with disabilities in developing the health care system should be increased significantly. While the

survey conducted by VANE in 2017 found that equal access to health care was, of all rights, the one that was realised the best, there were local differences.<sup>9</sup>

At the hearing of spring 2020, disability organisations additionally emphasised the importance of timely and adequate rehabilitation for maintaining everyday functional capacity. Several organisation highlighted challenges related to timely assessment of needs for assistive devices and the time it takes for the devices to arrive. They also called for more clarity regarding the rehabilitation and assistive device system as a whole and the terms of different forms of rehabilitation.

#### 4.9.4 Improving access to rehabilitation and health services: objectives and measures

##### **Objective:**

Ensuring that clients receive appropriate and timely health care and rehabilitation.

##### **Measures:**

74. Addressing client-centredness, needs assessment and timeliness in the context of the Social welfare and health centre of the future programme and other reforms, such as the Work ability programme, the Mental health strategy and the Age programme. While these programmes concern the entire population, they also influence the availability of services for persons with disabilities.

75. Developing multi-professional social and health centres that rely on digitalisation as well as the work inputs of different professionals and specialist level consultations.

76. Improving leadership in social welfare and health care services and personnel competence development, and supporting well-being at work in the social welfare and health care sector.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

9 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

**Objective:**

Improving the functional capacity of persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

77. Developing rehabilitation on the basis of the rehabilitation committee's proposals for 2020–2023, taking into account the rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities.

78. Ensuring that the criteria for the delivery of medical rehabilitation aids are up to date.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

## 4.10 Work and employment

### *(Article 27 of the UNCRPD)*

Persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others. They have the right to gain a living by work freely chosen. The work environment must be open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. The right to work must also be ensured for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment.

#### 4.10.1 Structural indicators

According to the UNCRPD, an effort should primarily be made to promote acquisition of work experience and career advance in the open labour market when promoting the employment of person with disabilities. In this respect, work in which the disability does not cause a material disadvantage should always be the primary starting point. Employment in this type of work can be supported by various services, the most important of which are related to assistive devices and other work accommodation measures.

According to section 8 of the Act on Public Employment and Business Services (916/2012), the employment and economic development office, the customer

service centre of the employment and economic development administration, or the centre for economic development, transport and the environment must provide public employment and business services impartially, in compliance with the same principles, irrespective of an individual client's gender and matters referred to in section 8(1) of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014). This section further states that employment and economic development authorities must present work and training options, job vacancies, and jobseekers so as to ensure equal opportunities for individual clients to jobseeking, professional development, and training, irrespective of gender and matters referred to in section 8(1) of the Non-Discrimination Act.

Section 2 of the Act on Public Officials in Central Government (750/1994) notes that the objective of the Act is to ensure the productive and appropriate performance of government tasks in compliance with the legal protection requirements and to ensure for the employee a fair position in relation to the employer. Section 15 of the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014) contains more details on reasonable accommodations through which the equality of persons with disabilities is realised.

Since the beginning of 2017, the minimum amounts of the rehabilitation allowance for young persons and the vocational rehabilitation allowance were increased to the level of the guarantee pension. This change encourages vocational rehabilitation, studying and employment and discourages retirement on a disability pension.

Provisions on work and other activities that support the access of persons with disabilities to employment are laid down in sections 27d-e of the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014). Work activities, job coaching and other stimulating activities are organised as services referred to in the Act on Intellectual Disabilities. In practice, so-called open work activities are also organised for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The intermediate labour market bridges the gap between unemployment and the open labour market, as its name indicates. The objective of the intermediate labour market is to build up clients' resources and improve their competence and vocational skills. When the focus is on improving a person's chances of entering the open labour market, the intermediate labour market is known as the transitional labour market. In the 'caring labour market', on the other hand, promoting life



management and inclusion is prioritised. Currently, the services and support offered by the intermediate labour market include rehabilitative work activities, work try-outs, job coaching and career guidance, work on a pay subsidy and various types of rehabilitation. Consequently, these activities are regulated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture each for their own part.

Intermediate labour market actors include municipalities, educational organisations, foundations, non-governmental organisations, associations, workshops, social enterprises and various projects set up to promote the employment of people in a vulnerable labour market position. In addition to public actors, the third sector plays an important role in the intermediate labour market. Private companies also operate in the intermediate labour market, for example when they take on people for work try-outs or offer work on a pay subsidy.

#### 4.10.2 Process indicators

In line with Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, a joint Work capacity programme was launched by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. This programme is steered by a sub-group of the Ministerial Working Group on Promoting Employment. The Government Programme objective of developing the intermediate labour market was integrated into this preparatory work. In addition to key ministries, participants in the sub-group include labour market, health and social service and disability organisations. The task of the sub-group is to prepare concrete proposals for the Ministerial Working Group regarding the implementation of the Work capacity programme.

In autumn 2019, the working group produced a snapshot of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities and partial work capacity and discussed rapid measures about to be launched in the administrative branches of both the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The working group additionally found that the employment of persons with disabilities should be examined separately in a cross-sectional study. An employee who worked full time on this study was recruited by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The study was published in June 2020 (<https://tem.fi/fi/-/selvitys-vammaisten-henkiloiden-tyollistymisen-esteita-purettava>).

The current legislation does not encourage a disability pension recipient to work beyond the earnings limit, as when the limit is exceeded, no pension is paid. This is why the legislation is to be amended by introducing a so-called linear model for partial disability pensions.

In the linear model, the amount of the partial disability pension decreases gradually as the earnings increase: the protected share would be 50% of the person's average earnings, however no less than the amount of the guarantee pension in 2022. Each euro earned in excess of the protected share would reduce the pension by 50 cents. The linear model would also have a ceiling rule, according to which the pension and earnings could not exceed the average earnings level. Any amount earned that would exceed the average earnings level would be fully deducted from the pension. The average earnings over a period of six months would be taken into account as earnings affecting the pension, and the earnings in January–June, for example, would affect the pension in August.

As the linear model is introduced, a partial disability pension would also be included in the national pension system. Those who receive a partial disability pension paid under the earnings-related pension scheme would be eligible for it. The amount of the pension would be one half of the national pension to which the person would be entitled as their full disability pension.

The same protected share would apply to the full disability pension as to the partial disability pension. If the protected share were exceeded, the partial disability pension amount would be paid; it would be determined using the linear model, similarly to the partial disability pension.

If the disability pension had not been paid for a continuous period of two years based on the linear model, the recipient would be regarded as having recovered their work ability, and the pension would be withdrawn. In addition, a full disability pension would be converted into a partial disability pension if the full pension had been halved due to the earnings for a continuous period of one year.

It is likely that the coronavirus crisis will keep exacerbating the risk of polarisation in the labour market during the recovery and reconstruction phase. The crisis has highlighted the fact that the ecosystem of social welfare and health care, rehabilitation and employment services is currently not mature enough to

withstand a crisis of this type. The service production was only partly able to meet the service needs which increased and changed in content. In practice, the structures of everyday life changed for many people and will continue to change, and sufficient immediate support for this is not available. For example, the crisis has increased the demand and need for various remote services. In this respect, public actors and the market are only able to satisfy the service needs partially or inadequately. This situation will increase the risk of exclusion from working life and the emergence of various problems related to work ability and well-being. In addition to widening health and well-being gaps, the increasing socio-economic disparities also push those in the most vulnerable position further away from the labour market.

As a result of the crisis, increasing the employment rate and thus promoting the employment of special groups will continue to be important objectives. Both the rapid growth in public debt and the potentially increasing exclusion from the labour market (such as retirements on disability pension) will lead to a need to take into account those whom the crisis has left in the most vulnerable position when preparing measures to promote employment.

Efforts to step up services that promote employment cannot be completed fully without stronger cooperation with the non-governmental organisations. Many organisations offer work opportunities in the intermediate labour market as well as services that promote finding a job and support coping at work. A number of organisations also have the professional competence needed to employ, support and help persons with disabilities facing a difficult labour market situation in finding suitable further pathways. In practice, this would mean stepping up development partnerships between organisations, municipalities and the TE administration in concrete terms, procuring more services from non-governmental organisations and funding these development projects. There is a particular need to promote activities in which intermediate labour market actors offer services integrated into work performed in an employment relationship. This would mean that rather than being just a client, the person in question also has an employment relationship with the intermediate labour market actor. An example of this is the Paikka Auki ('Vacancy') programme funded by STEA. The coronavirus crisis, and especially the growing number of the unemployed, emphasise the importance of transitional work. In the long term, however, more active and concrete job creation

efforts are a precondition for raising the employment rate, and in this case the tasks cannot be limited to not-for-profit work offered by organisations.

A report on the structural and legislative obstacles that persons with disabilities face in working life was published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in June 2020. The report contains several proposals for measures, only some of which fall within the remit of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The employment of persons with disabilities necessitates a complex ecosystem. On this basis, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's Centre of Expertise for Impact Investing is modelling a structure that could be used to systematically describe the impacts of various measures on employment.

In particular, digital solutions should be developed to support the identification of service needs in the early stages of the client relationship, taking client volumes into account. However, the development of digital services is not a sufficient response to the current service needs. Qualitative and quantitative development of the service needs assessment covering all factors that affect the employment of persons with disabilities is needed to achieve this. Digital solutions should be developed for identifying and assessing service needs, including self-assessment methods, indicators for professionals' use and information systems, also ensuring that they are accessible.

Digital tools for supporting the work ability and employment of persons with disabilities should be developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to ensure that their joint client relationships can be managed appropriately and to lend better support for the client's employment. The service package should be developed, making it possible for the TE Services, municipal employment services, social welfare and health care services, Kela, employment pension institutions and rehabilitation services to use remote services when this makes sense from the client's perspective. The services should be redesigned, taking into account clients' individual needs and the possibility of providing face-to-face service.

Among other things, this can be promoted by means of various service vouchers that enable clients to access the services of selected service providers. At the same time, alternative models can be tested in service procurement and the determination of service provider fees.

The importance of relevance in the assessment of service needs is stressed in providing effective services for jobseekers with disabilities, as they may also need social and health care and rehabilitation services as well as assistive device services. The role of transport services appears to be particularly significant in disability services. The assessment of service needs and timely launch of services are central in the ecosystem of multidisciplinary services.

In service coordination, the competence of such actors as TE Offices' (Employment and Economic Development Office) work ability coordinators should be used, ensuring seamless cooperation between different parties. While the service channels must be sufficiently versatile, they must also add up to a package that is interoperable with the services of other actors. In addition, a sufficient volume in the offer of services is needed.

As set out in Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, a National mental health strategy was published in spring 2020. Developing mental health services that rehabilitate clients for working life is part of this strategy.

The objective of the IPS (Individual Placement and Support) development project is to support people with mental disorders and mental health rehabilitees with entering, returning to and staying in the labour market. The IPS model comprises evidence-based job coaching for subsidised employment as a service integrated into psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation. The IPS model has achieved good results in the area of employment, especially among those with severe mental health disorders. The model has not yet been widely used in Finland, and its effectiveness has not been assessed in the Finnish conditions. In 2020–2022, the practices through which IPS job coaching will be implemented in Finland as a service integrated in psychiatric care and rehabilitation will be modelled in projects funded by central government grants.

### 4.10.3 Outcome indicators

The number of unemployed persons with disabilities and long-term illnesses, which had declined for five years, took a turn for the worse as a result of the coronavirus crisis. At the end of August, the TE Offices had nearly 330,100 unemployed and laid-off jobseekers in their books, or about 75,000 more than the year before.

The year-on-year growth in unemployment among persons with disabilities and long-term illnesses (+ 7.0%) was significantly lower than among those with no disability or long-term illness that would be a barrier to employment (+ 21.1%). This finding may be explained by the backlog of customers in TE Offices caused by the pandemic, as a result of which the customer's need for such services may not have been recorded or even identified in the first place. It should be noted that health information of this nature can only be recorded in the TE Office's customer information system if a long-term illness or injury undermines the customer's ability to find a job, choose their occupation or advance on their career.

The number of persons with disabilities and long-term illnesses registered in the TE Office's customer information system does not describe the entire target group. In a broad sense, the target group would also include those persons who have not registered as jobseekers for one reason or another. Unemployed persons receiving a disability pension who are not actively looking for work at all, or do not do so through the TE Services, are another special group. There are indications, at least indirect ones, that those participating in work and other activities regulated in the Social Welfare Act or in services regulated in the Act on Intellectual Disabilities have often not registered as jobseekers. It is possible that both they and the TE Service experts have not necessarily been aware of these customers' possibility of registering as jobseekers.

At the hearing organised in spring 2020, several disability organisations pointed out that equal opportunities to work are currently realised poorly. Organisations emphasised the importance of reasonable accommodations in recruitment, job descriptions and the work environment alike as well as making use of positive discrimination in the recruitment phase. They also drew attention to the fact that a significant proportion of persons with disabilities receive a disability pension, even if they would prefer to work full or part time. They supported the introduction of the linear model and hoped that it would also extend to the full disability pension. Work and employment on an equal basis with others were regarded as the area in which the rights of persons with disabilities were realised the worst in the survey conducted by VANE in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

#### 4.10.4 Fostering equal employment and access to work: objectives and measures

**Objective:**

Launching the development of digital employment services.

**Measures:**

79. As part of more extensive efforts to develop the assessment of service needs, launching the development of a digital tool for identifying needs for services in support of work ability. As part of this measure, integrating the Työelämään.fi web service more closely into the Job Market ecosystem of the TE services.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.*

**Objective:**

Improving the targeting of TE services.

**Measures:**

80. Drawing on the special expertise of disability organisations to update the service design of TE services. Integrating support elements needed to lower the recruitment threshold into the services.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment*

**Objective:**

Promoting work performed in an employment relationship by developing the intermediate labour market.

**Measures:**

81. Creating a systematic and goal-oriented intermediate labour market actor in Finland drawing on experiences gained of the Swedish company Samhall and the results of the work bank experiment as examples. The idea is to improve the possibilities of persons with partial work ability and others in a vulnerable situation to enter the open labour market by offering them subsidised jobs as well as

the training and other support they need for the transition to the open labour market. The objectives also include providing a job of a sufficiently long duration for those who cannot find employment in the open labour market. Launching a study which will define the content of the Finnish model and the organisation, funding forms and other implementation arrangements of the activities. The goal is to launch the activities no later than in 2022.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.*

**Objective:**

Promoting work performed in an employment relationship in the open labour market.

**Measure:**

82. In a project carried out with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, promoting the use of an employment clause in public procurement. Deploying the operating model developed in various ESF projects. Regional coordinators will be used in this project to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment*

## 4.11 Adequate standard of living and social protection (Article 28 of the UNCRPD)

Persons with disabilities must be ensured an adequate standard of living and social protection for themselves and their families. Their right to adequate food, clothing and housing must be recognised. Ensuring access to affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs is the key.



### 4.11.1 Structural indicators

Social security in Finland consists of benefits, allowances and services that secure citizens' income. Legislation on income security includes the Health Insurance Act (1224/2004), the Act on Social Insurance Institution of Finland's Rehabilitation Benefits and Rehabilitation Allowance Benefits (566/2005), the Disability Benefits Act (570/2007), the National Pensions Act (568/2007), the acts on earnings-related pensions, the Occupational Accidents, Injuries and Diseases Act (459/2015), the Motor Liability Insurance Act (460/2016), the Unemployment Security Act (1290/2002), the Act on General Housing Allowance (938/2014), the Act on Housing Allowance for Pensioners (571/2007), the Act on Social Assistance (1412/1997), the Act on Financial Aid for Students (65/1994) and the Act on Adult Education Assistance (1276/2000).

The Disability Benefits Act (570/2007) contains provisions on disability benefits, the purpose of which is to support persons with disabilities or long-term illnesses who live in Finland with coping in daily life, participation in work or studies and maintaining their functional capacity, living at home, rehabilitation and care. Disability benefits include disability allowance for persons aged under 16, disability allowance for persons over 16, care allowance for pensioners and a disability supplement for war veterans included in the care allowance.

From the beginning of 2019, the minimum amounts of sickness allowance and rehabilitation allowance were increased to a level equal to the labour market support, and the waiting period of 55 days for the minimum sickness allowance was removed. This change encourages applicants to apply for sickness allowance if necessary and thus access to assessment of rehabilitation needs and rehabilitation.

According to the Act on Client Charges in Health and Social Services (734/1992), later referred to as the Client Charges Act, service users may be charged for municipal social welfare and health care services unless otherwise provided by law. The Client Charges Act and the Decree issued by virtue of it lay down the maximum fee that can be charged for certain social welfare and health care services, in addition to which certain services are to be provided free of charge. The municipality may decide to introduce a fee that is lower than the maximum charge or provide the service free of charge. Municipalities may not charge for the services a fee that exceeds their production costs.

### 4.11.2 Process indicators

In keeping with Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, the Government has launched a social security reform, which will be prepared by a parliamentary committee based on research evidence (Social Security Committee). The Committee's work aims to achieve a long-term perspective in developing the structure and operation of social security.

The reform aims at a clearer and more streamlined system, where people can balance work and social security in changing life situations. The key aspects of the social security reform are social justice and protecting the income security of those who encounter social risks. Social security must respond to people's need for a meaningful life and sense of inclusion and help create opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, active individual initiative, participation and lifelong learning in all situations.

The task of the Social Security Committee is to prepare an overhaul of the entire social security system. The Committee examines basic security, earnings-related income security, social assistance, the links between them and their funding, in addition to better integration of services and benefits.

Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme makes a reference to the linear model for partial disability pension, stating that the incentive traps that prevent people on disability pension from working will be abolished by introducing a linear model for partial disability pension. For a more detailed discussion of the linear model, see section 5.10 on employment in this document.

In order to promote the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities, the legislation on income security and service legislation associated with it could be assessed and developed as a whole in the context of the social security reform.

To secure the participation and opportunities for exerting influence of persons with disabilities, the Disability Forum is represented among the Committee's permanent experts, and the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE is represented in the Committee's sub-group on work and functional capacity.

From the perspective of children with disabilities, it is also important to establish how municipal services and, on the other hand, social security work in situations

where children live in turns with both parents. The support for these situations in the service and social security system is to be developed during the current government term. To this end, a report will be produced between March 2019 and October 2020 as a project of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities (VN TEAS).

The Government Programme states that the Act on Client Charges in Health and Social Services will be reformed to remove barriers to treatment and to increase equality in health by introducing more free services and by making client charges more equitable.

### 4.11.3 Outcome indicators

A government proposal on reforming the Client Charges Act (HE 129/2020 VP) was submitted to Parliament in September 2020. While this is quite an extensive partial reform, the proposal does not include changes that would affect the status of persons with disabilities in particular. Instead, the regulation relevant to persons with disabilities will be assessed later in connection with the overhaul of the Client Charges Act.

In statements received on the partial reform, it was considered important from the perspective of persons with disabilities that a client charge would only be collected if this were laid down in an Act. More effective regulation on such possibilities as reducing or waving client charges was also considered essential.

In the context of income security, statistical data and research evidence produced by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) and the Finnish Centre for Pensions (ETK) as well as research evidence provided by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) are available.

In spring 2020, several disability organisations brought up the vulnerable financial position of persons with disabilities and stressed smoother integration of social security, pay and pensions as an important measure. In particular, NGOs drew attention to the imbalance between the costs incurred from a disability or illness and the wage and pension income compensating for these costs. They called for

an adjustment of client charges and co-payments to a more reasonable level and supported the introduction of the linear model. In the survey conducted by VANE in 2017, an adequate standard of living was found to be the most important issue to be promoted; at that time, too, especially the position of people relying on minimum social assistance was the greatest cause for concern.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.11.4 Fostering an adequate standard of living and social protection: measures and objectives

**Objective:**

Addressing the rights of persons with disabilities in the reform of the Client Charges Act, including the coordination of the Client Charges Act and the Act on Disability Services and Assistance to be revised.

**Measure:**

83. Improving the efficiency of legislation on reducing and waving client charges.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Improving the income security of persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

84. Implementing a linear model that will facilitate the combination of social security and employment.

85. Paying attention to the income development of persons with disabilities as part of the social security system overhaul.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

11 Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

## 4.12 Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (*Article 30 of the UNCRPD*)

Persons with disabilities are entitled to participate in cultural life, and develop their creative, artistic and intellectual potential and understanding. Ensuring the accessibility of facilities and services as well as equal opportunities for participation are essential.

Persons with disabilities are entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.

### 4.12.1 Structural indicators

The cultural, sports and youth sectors in Finland are based on a strong and vibrant civil society. The Ministry of Education and Culture plays an important role in maintaining and developing culture and art.

The Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019) applies to sports and cultural policy. In addition to this Act, current statutes that promote the possibilities of persons with visual impairments and other print disabilities include the EU Print Disabled Directive (EU) 2017/1564 and the EU Accessibility Directive (EU) 2019/88. The National Center for Accessible Literature and Publishing in Finland (Celia), which operates in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture, is an expert centre which provides services for persons with visual impairments and other print disabilities. Celia maintains the web service [Saavutettavasti.fi](https://saavutettavasti.fi), which provides advice related to accessibility.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the general direction, coordination and development of sports policy and for creating the general preconditions for physical activity. Since 2015, public authorities have had stronger powers to guide, monitor, assess and impose sanctions in equality and non-discrimination matters – also in the field of physical activity. This is facilitated by the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014), the Equality Act (609/1986), the Youth Act (1285/2016) and the new Sports Act (390/2015). In practice this means that, among other things, the ministry takes into account compliance with these Acts

when disbursing grants. Since autumn 2016, one of the general eligibility criteria for discretionary government transfers and grants has been taking into account the physical activity of persons with disabilities.

The National Sports Council is an expert body of the Ministry of Education and Culture. A report produced by the Council titled Central government as a promoter of adapted physical activity and sports for persons with disabilities (2018) found that the sports administration allocated about three per cent of the central government appropriations directly to physical activity and sports suitable for persons with disabilities. The promotion of inclusive physical activity and sports for persons with disabilities is additionally part of most other appropriations and grants.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's Advisory Board for Sport-related Ethical Matters, which was established in 2015, serves as a coordination and cooperation body between different administrative branches and sports sector actors. Promoting non-discrimination was one of the ethical questions in sport that the Advisory Board discussed during its first term of office. The members of the Advisory Board include the Finnish Paralympic Committee, the Finnish League for Human Rights and SETA – LGBTI Rights in Finland.

One of the objectives set out in section 2 of the Youth Act (1285/2016), which entered into force at the beginning of 2017, is promoting equality, non-discrimination and the realisation of rights among young people. According to the Act, the promotion of equality (including the rights of persons with disabilities) is taken into account in principle and in addition to the provisions of the Non-Discrimination Act in all promotion of youth work and activities and in youth policy, as well as in the responsibilities and cooperation of the central and local government and in central government funding within the scope of the Act. Section 1 of the Youth Act contains a separate provision stating that, in addition to the provisions laid down in the Youth Act, international obligations binding on Finland (including the UNCRPD) shall be complied with.

Section 5 of the Government Decree issued by virtue of the Youth Act referred to above provides for positive special treatment in the context of granting, upon application, eligibility for central government aid to an organisation representing a linguistic or other minority.

The promotion of non-discrimination, minority rights, equality and human rights is one of the monitoring criteria applied by the ministry when it grants discretionary government transfers and grants for national and international development activities according to the Youth Act. In recent years, the share of projects relating to these themes out of all supported projects has been significant.

### 4.12.2 Process indicators

The Cooperation Group on Cultural Wellbeing (2020–2023) appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health focuses on promoting the accessibility of art and culture extensively: everyone should have the right and an equal opportunity to participate in art and culture at different life stages. The final report titled Accessibility of art and culture published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2014 is the latest programme paper directly related to culture for persons with disabilities, and it remains topical in many respects.

Public libraries have particular significance when it comes to promoting the cultural rights of persons with disabilities. The objective of the Public Libraries Act is to promote the population's equal opportunities for education and culture, access to and use of information, culture of reading and versatile literacy, possibilities for lifelong learning and competence development as well as active citizenship, democracy and freedom of expression. In the state budget of 2019, a special appropriation of EUR 860,000 was allocated to public libraries' digital project. This amount was available in 2020 to improve the digital skills of library staff and to promote the implementation of the AUTA project's operating model in libraries.

In spring 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture produced a preliminary study on reforming the Act on the Library for the Visually Impaired. Information on such aspects as the current state of the library's activities, drivers of change and international development will be collected in the course of this project. The ministry will make a decision on launching the actual legislative reform in summer 2020.

The Arts Promotion Centre, which operates in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture, offers grants for the cultural activities of disabled communities and for promoting communities' access to culture as an annual support form.

In the context of children's culture, a project related to basic education in art and the accessibility of children's culture for special groups was funded under the Ministry of Education and Culture's support for cultural experimentation and development projects. (<https://www.lastenkulttuuri.fi/sata2/>)

The Finnish model of hobbies promotes the equal opportunities of children and young people, including children and young people with disabilities, to pursue enjoyable and free hobbies in connection with the school day.

In the field of sports policy, Prime Minister Marin's Government aims to increase local physical activity environments which are essential for promoting the physical activity of people with disabilities and special groups and to promote sports for people with disabilities. A precondition for putting the integration of physical activity for persons with disabilities into practice is extensive proactive measures rather than merely intervention in cases of discrimination. Taking the obligation to promote physical activity for persons with disabilities into account in all activities of the sports sector and in the distribution of grants is the key.

The National Sports Council carried out an evaluation of the Schools on the Move programme in spring 2019 (publications of the National Sports Council 2019:4), in which children and young people with special needs were also taken into account. The right to culture, art, recreation and leisure enshrined in article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is realised through opportunities for hobbies.

The Schools on the Move programme additionally coordinates certain projects supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The project network also covers contents for students in need of adapted physical activity or special support, including the Iloon yli esteiden ('Overcoming barriers') project implemented by Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting. This project was introduced in schools as part of the Schools on the Move programme in 2018. Its objective was to provide every pupil, without forgetting those in need of special support, with more opportunities to participate in physical activity during the school day, including PE classes, action-based teaching and recesses. The project has produced an idea bank, the contents of which have been brought to comprehensive schools through the communication channels of the Schools on the Move programme.



A government resolution outlines the measures taken to improve the conditions in which young people grow and live during the term of government. The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (VANUPO) is a cross-administrative programme adopted for four years at a time. Its main themes include preventing the exclusion of young people and promoting their meaningful life, safety and inclusion. The current programme was adopted for 2020–2023. The different capabilities, origins and functional capacity of young people are taken into account in VANUPO programme implementation. VANUPO promotes the realisation of equal opportunities for all young people.

The new Youth Act (1285/2016) contains provisions on national youth work centres of expertise and their funding. The Ministry has agreed with the centres of expertise on their tasks for this period. The performance guidance document for each centre of expertise contains a section under which the centre must take into account the needs of young people representing different genders and language groups or with disabilities as well as promote the sustainable development goals and equal treatment of young people in its activities. The promotion of equality (including the rights of persons with disabilities) in the work of the centres of expertise is also regularly monitored to ensure that this objective is realised in practice.

The section of the Youth Act (1285/2016) setting out the objectives of the Act lays the foundation for all discretionary government transfers and grants in the youth sector. Among other things, this means that when disbursing grants, the ministry may prioritise activities that promote equality among young people.

The ministry also regularly monitors measures aiming to promote equality in the youth sector. For example, national youth organisations are asked in connection with their grant applications to describe the measures they take to promote equality and non-discrimination in their activities. The information provided is taken into account when considering the amounts of central government grants to organisations.

The ministry has also supported projects focusing on young people who belong to minorities (including discretionary government grants for leisure activities organised for young asylum seekers) and projects that promote equality (discretionary government transfers to municipal youth services for projects combating hate speech) through separate, targeted calls for proposals. Based on

the information provided by the projects, it appears that they have been successful in promoting equality among young people belonging to different groups.

### 4.12.3 Outcome indicators

The Finnish Foundation for Cultural Policy Research Cupore, which is co-funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture, produced a report titled *Yhdenvertainen kulttuuri!* ('Equal Culture!') commissioned by the ministry in 2017. The report focuses on discretionary government grants for the cultural activities of communities of persons with disabilities and for promoting the accessibility of culture. While the report shows how public support has been a prerequisite for the preservation and development of cultural activities in the communities of persons with disabilities and for increasing the provision of art and cultural services accessible to persons with disabilities, it also draws attention to the inadequacy of the support and its uneven allocation.

The National Sports Council conducted an evaluation of the Schools on the Move programme in spring 2019 (publications of the National Sports Council 2019:4). Promoting pupils' participation in the planning and implementation of the activities, which was one of the aims of the programme, has been realised reasonably well. The evaluation found that the pupils' participation, especially when it comes to assessing the Schools on the Move activities, needs to be developed in municipalities and schools. The available data did not enable an extensive evaluation of whether the participation of the least physically active groups or special groups has increased in schools. The data indicated that there are local variations in the attention given to special groups and minorities. A key objective of the Schools on the Move programme is to support the participation of all pupils and thus strengthen inclusive activities in schools and projects.

At the hearing held in spring 2020, disability organisations brought up the fact that inadequate personal support prevents the participation of children and young people with disabilities, especially in recreational and cultural activities. The survey conducted by VANE in autumn 2017 also found sufficient transport services and adequate help provided by a personal assistants or assisting staff important in terms of recreational and cultural activities. In addition, sufficient interpretation services were a prerequisite for participation for many children and young people.

The responses drew attention to the fact that personal assistance should also be available in the evenings and on weekends. Admitting the assistant free of charge was also considered important.<sup>12</sup>

The survey conducted by VANE in 2017 found that accessible services, and information on the services, were prerequisites for participating in cultural, recreational, leisure and physical activities. The respondents said that an inaccessible environment prevents participation in many cases; among other things, the need for an induction loop in the facilities and accessible parking spaces was mentioned. The possibility of addressing the needs of different disability groups in the activities was considered important.

#### 4.12.4 Fostering participation in cultural, recreational and leisure activities and sport: objectives and measures

##### **Objective:**

Promoting the possibilities of persons with disabilities to participate in art and cultural activities.

##### **Measures:**

86. Supporting the art and cultural activities of national disability organisations and communities, including Theatre Totti (formerly the Theatre for the Deaf) and projects and activities that improve the accessibility of art and culture.

87. Including the promotion of accessibility and non-discrimination in the criteria for grants as a separate heading in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

##### **Objective:**

Raising awareness of the accessibility of cultural activities.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffrén, T. (2017). *A survey on the implementation of rights in the daily life of persons with disabilities*. Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For online access, [click here](#).

**Measure:**

88. Among national actors, especially the Culture for All service offers information and support for cultural actors in issues related to accessibility and diversity.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessible library services.

**Measure:**

89. The performance targets of the National Center for Accessible Literature and Publishing in Finland for the period 2020–2023 include developing online services, promoting accessible publication and reading, improving the availability of services, developing products and services for children and young people, and complementing accessible publication activities with Celia's offer of books.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with Celia*

**Objective:**

Promoting the mainstreaming of physical activities for persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

90. An obligation to prepare equality and non-discrimination plans in which the participation of persons with disabilities in physical activity is one of the key measures has been added as an eligibility criterion for general grants for sports organisations. Training (clinics) on these plans has been provided for grant recipients.

91. Taking physical activity for persons with disabilities into account in development grants for club activities and a physically active lifestyle.

92. Highlighting equality as a targeted eligibility criterion for grants in the calls for proposals relating to discretionary government transfers for the Schools on the Move programme and measures for integrating physical activity into the school day organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional State Administrative

Agencies. Grants have also been targeted at projects that specifically develop the opportunities of those in need of special support for physical activity during the school day.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessibility in the construction of sports facilities.

**Measures:**

93. Updating the policy document on the construction of sports facilities.

94. Accessibility is an eligibility condition for central government grants intended for the construction of sports facilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting the equal opportunities of persons with disabilities to use youth work services and participate in youth activities.

**Measures:**

95. In keeping with the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme, the Discrimination-free Zone campaign will be stepped up in the youth sector in 2022–2023. The campaign consists of targeted communication, materials and training events for actors in the field.

96. In line with the VANUPO programme, examining the equality plans required according to the Youth Act and their objectives and measures related to preventing discrimination. Implementing additional and enhancing measures on the basis of observations made.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Improving the accessibility of television services in connection with the amendments to the Act on the Provision of Digital Services.

**Measure:**

97. Gradually expanding the accessibility of media services, for example by bringing on-demand streaming services within the scope of the accessibility obligations as well as increasing the obligations related to reporting and planning and those associated with the quality of captions.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications*

## 4.13 International cooperation

### *(Articles 11, 32 and 33 of the UNCRPD)*

The rights of persons with disabilities must also be ensured in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters. The participation of persons with disabilities in international cooperation must be supported. Capacity-building must be supported, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices internationally.

#### 4.13.1 Structural indicators

Promoting and realising the rights of persons with disabilities is one of the cross-cutting objectives of Finland's human rights and development policy. The aim is to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in political decision-making, both in Finland and internationally, to strengthen the international disability rights movement and promote the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities.

The rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account as part of international efforts to promote human rights by the EU, the UN, the Council of Europe, OSCE and other international organisations. The views of persons with disabilities and the organisations that represent them are taken into account when formulating Finland's policies. Hearings are held within the framework of the coordination group for international disability policy led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for instance.

### 4.13.2 Process indicators

Finland's first periodic report on UNCRPD implementation was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 9 August 2019. This report was prepared by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in cooperation with various ministries and other key authorities. The participation of organisations representing persons with disabilities was taken into account as set out in article 4(3) of the Convention. The preparation of the periodic report was launched in September 2017 at a discussion event organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The draft report was available for open commenting on the website [www.lausuntopalvelu.fi](http://www.lausuntopalvelu.fi) in March and April 2018. Through this web service, the draft was also directly distributed for commenting to more than one hundred different authorities and NGOs. During the commenting period, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs organised a hearing on the content of the report for authorities and NGOs.

The Government of Åland issued a comprehensive report on UNCRPD implementation in Åland, which was taken into account in the periodic report, and the full report produced by the Government of Åland was published on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' website.

As set out in the European Union's Code of Conduct between the Council, the Member States and the Commission relating to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010/C 340/08), the draft report was notified to the Commission in July 2019. The Commission's proposals for supplementing the draft report were taken into consideration in the report.

The participation of disability organisations in the periodic reporting on the implementation of other key human rights treaties of the UN and the Council of Europe also promotes discussion on the rights of persons with disabilities in the monitoring bodies of the treaties and is reflected in the contents of the conclusions and recommendations adopted on Finland.

In development cooperation, the rights of persons with disabilities are promoted through three primary mechanisms: special projects, mainstreaming as well as political influence and dialogue. Examples of Finland's special measures include funding the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) and supporting the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Finland also funds disability organisations and its own networks

in developing countries. The Abilis Foundation and the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are the most visible ones of the organisations receiving support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The rights of persons with disabilities are important in Finland's advocacy within the UN system: the rights of women and girls with disabilities and the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) are prioritised. Finland is additionally an active member of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) network<sup>13</sup>.

In 2019, performance guidance related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities has been promoted by integrating it into development policy priorities, sub-objectives and performance indicators. In addition, there is a separate result area related to the rights of persons with disabilities under priority one (women's and girls' rights). All goals of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that promote equality and women's and girls' rights also apply to women and girls with disabilities, and all performance indicators are subject to the requirement of disaggregation by disability and gender. Among other things, the objectives and funding related to the rights of persons with disabilities are monitored using the OECD DAC Disability Marker and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Disability Finance Marker. In addition, the ministry reports on the results to Parliament once every four years<sup>14</sup>.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs supports disability projects from both development cooperation and humanitarian aid funds. The strengthening of civil society and NGOs' advocacy are supported through projects conducted by Finnish NGOs and local partners. Among other things, these projects promote the livelihoods and vocational training of persons with disabilities, inclusive teaching and accessibility of services. Projects focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities are implemented with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' support in many Asian, African and Latin American countries.

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13 GLAD works to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) globally. The organisation's activities include advocacy, information sharing and coordination of the actions and positions of different donors.

14 The next Finnish development policy results report will be published in 2022.



In line with the policy document titled Finland as a donor of humanitarian assistance, which was updated in 2019, Finland wishes to ensure that persons with disabilities have possibilities for full and meaningful participation at all stages of humanitarian aid activities: the organisations supported by Finland must take persons with disabilities into account in the planning of humanitarian aid projects and report on the beneficiaries in compliance with the Washington Group instructions. In refugee camps in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, projects aiming to improve the availability of clean water and sanitation while ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities are underway.

One of the main achievements of Finland's Presidency in 2019 were the Council conclusions drawn up at Finland's initiative, in which all EU countries committed themselves to strengthening the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian work and supported the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action<sup>15</sup> published in late 2019. Among other things, these guidelines promote humanitarian actors' common standards on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Finland supported the drafting of the Guidelines both politically and financially through UNICEF.

In addition, Finland organised an extensive discussion in the Council working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The perspective of persons with disabilities had a high profile in all thematic discussions and those concerning crisis zones during Finland's Presidency.

Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities is also a key objective of Finland's advocacy in humanitarian organisations funded by it. Additionally, Finland engages in advocacy together with other donors. Since 2019, Finland has chaired GLAD's task force on humanitarian action together with UNICEF.

Partly as a result of Finland's advocacy, the inclusion of persons with disabilities was identified as one of the priorities for the Pooled Funds administered by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)<sup>16</sup>. This decision

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<sup>15</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>.

<sup>16</sup> The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs).

has a significant impact on the non-governmental organisations carrying out the practical work.

In 2019, Finland participated in organising an event themed on persons with disabilities at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In addition, Finland took on a leading role in highlighting the inclusion of persons with disabilities at the Global Refugee Forum held in December 2019 and gave a national undertaking to fund a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) in the UNHCR field office in 2021.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has appointed an ambassador for disability affairs whose mandate covers the entire foreign affairs administration during the operating period. The Ambassador's task is to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Finland's foreign and security policy, economic external relations and development policy.

### 4.13.3 Outcome indicators

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities only holds two sessions a year. It has a backlog of States Parties' periodical reports to review. There are 182 States Parties in total, and processing times have stretched to four years. It is likely that Finland's report will only be reviewed in 2023. The procedure for strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system (A/RES/68/268) initiated in 2020, which examines the overall state of the treaty monitoring bodies, may affect the sessions and processing schedule of the Committee. The pandemic situation will also have an impact on the schedule.

Regarding international cooperation, the organisations present at the hearing of spring 2020 found it important that Finland enable the participation of persons with disabilities and Finnish disability organisations in cooperation with partner countries' disability organisations. The organisations said that, in the context of development cooperation, it is important to pay particular attention to persons with disabilities in rescue missions and the aftermath of humanitarian and climate crises.

#### 4.13.4 Fostering the rights of persons with disabilities in international cooperation: objectives and measures

**Objective:**

Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in international cooperation.

**Measure:**

98. Actively highlighting the rights of persons with disabilities in the work of the EU, UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and, if possible, other international organisations as well as different global political processes and negotiations.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming these rights in development cooperation.

**Measures:**

99. Guidelines and tools for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities have been completed and are in active use.

100. In the human rights and humanitarian training organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account, and these rights will be integrated better into training on cross-sectional objectives and the implementation of a human rights-based approach, among other things.

101. Continuing to support activities of non-governmental organisations, emphasising a human rights-based approach and taking cross-sectional objectives into account.

102. Continuing to develop guidelines and tools that promote the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in all forms of development cooperation.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Supporting projects that promote the rights of persons with disabilities politically and, as far as possible, financially.

**Measure:**

103. Continuing to provide political and, if possible, also financial support for UN activities in support of the rights of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Strengthening the rights of girls and women with disabilities in international cooperation.

**Measures:**

104. As Finland chairs UN Women in 2020, promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities is a key priority.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities through international advocacy.

**Measure:**

105. Continuing advocacy within UN organisations and the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Finland's priorities include implementing the UNDIS and the IASC guidelines, improving the status of women and girls with disabilities, appointing disability representatives in organisations, funding disability rights activities (both specific measures and mainstreaming) and building know-how.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Taking the rights of persons with disabilities into account in humanitarian crises.

**Measures:**

106. In 2020–2023, Finland will continue to emphasise disability activities during humanitarian crises, including such pandemics as COVID-19. Finland supports financially the humanitarian aid work of UN organisations and Finnish NGOs and engages in active dialogue with them about mainstreaming the disability perspective.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness among persons with disabilities and disability organisations and promoting their participation in international cooperation and the review of the UNCRPD periodic report.

**Measures:**

107. Disseminating information about the review of Finland's first periodic report on the implementation of the UNCRPD prior to its consideration by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including about disability organisations' possibility to submit written opinions ('parallel reports') to the Committee and to attend a closed hearing of the Committee.

108. Organising a possibility of watching the consideration of Finland's first report in Helsinki as a live broadcast on the UN WebTV.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities in development policy.

**Measure:**

109. Reporting on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities as part of the development policy results report.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities belonging to indigenous peoples in the Nordic countries.

**Measure:**

110. Focusing on the rights of Sámi persons with disabilities as the theme of Finland's chairmanship of the Council of Nordic Cooperation on Disability in 2021. Organising a Nordic seminar on this theme in Inari in August 2021.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and VANE*

## 5 Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored by the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE) in cooperation with the other responsible bodies and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Annual monitoring will take place at VANE's meetings. At the end of the action plan period, a monitoring exercise covering the entire period will be completed, and a monitoring report will be prepared. For the purposes of the monitoring report, the possibility of carrying out not only self-assessments by the ministries but also an external evaluation of how the Action Plan's objectives have been attained and measures implemented will be examined. The external evaluation could also include an overview of the key studies on the rights of persons with disabilities completed during the action plan period, their findings and the available statistics. The evaluation report could also include a review of the case law relevant to the rights of persons with disabilities and any positions of the supervisory authorities during the action plan period.

The participation of persons with disabilities in this monitoring will also be ensured by providing them with an opportunity to assess action plan implementation for their part. The monitoring report will additionally assess progress made with the themes brought up by disability organisations at the hearing and the outcome indicators during the action plan period. This will also lay a foundation for situational awareness, objectives and measures for the next period.

# Appendix 1 List of objectives and measures

## Fostering inclusion and participation: objectives and measures

### **Objective:**

Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in different sectors and levels of central government.

### **Measure:**

1. Ensuring by appropriate means the participation of persons with disabilities in legislative reforms and other drafting and decision-making that are essential for them.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*

### **Objective:**

Transitioning from individual hearings to systematic and structural participation and collaboration.

### **Measure:**

2. Regularly inviting advocacy organisations and experts by experience to stakeholder events and workshops.

*Responsible body: All ministries*

### **Objective:**

Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties.

### **Measure:**

3. Supporting organisations that represent the rights of persons with disabilities in more extensive participation in monitoring the



implementation of human rights treaties, including providing UN treaty monitoring bodies with information on the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities in each area to which the treaty in question applies, both for the Committee's list of issues, the responses to which form the government's periodic report, and as the so-called independent parallel report submitted in addition to the government's periodic report.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in international disability policy.

**Measures:**

4. Supporting the participation of a disability organisation representative in the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
5. Encouraging more extensive participation of organisations representing the rights of persons with disabilities in periodic reporting on human rights treaties.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the genuine participation of persons with disabilities at local and regional level.

**Measure:**

6. Through knowledge-based management and spreading of good practices, supporting the activities of municipal and regional disability councils to ensure that they have opportunities to exert influence and sufficient resources.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Justice.*

**Objective:**

Advocating the rights of Sámi persons with disabilities in national disability policy, drafting and decision-making.

**Measure:**

7. Organising cooperation meetings with the Sámi Parliament and SámiSoster association on topical issues related to services for the persons with disabilities and disability policy.

*Responsible body: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.*

## Fostering equality: objectives and measures

**Objective:**

Promoting the de facto equality of persons with disabilities in all sectors and at all levels of administration.

**Measure:**

8. Addressing the equality of persons with disabilities in the ministries' equality and non-discrimination plans and action plans.

*Responsible body: All ministries*

**Objective:**

Ensuring the fulfilment of obligations of the UNCRPD in the pending legislation on self-determination.

**Measures:**

9. Organising a round table discussion on supported decision-making to underpin the drafting of legislation.

10. Investigating good practices for supported decision-making together with disability organisations.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice*

11. Ensuring that the special needs of persons with disabilities and the obligations of the UNCRPD are taken into account fully in the preparation and later implementation of the legislation on the right of self-determination.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality and non-discrimination as a strategic and visible part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's system of discretionary government transfers and knowledge-based management.

**Measure:**

12. Investigating the possibilities of promoting equality and non-discrimination through discretionary government transfers.

Organising training and workshops for stakeholders participating in the discretionary government transfers process to support the development of the activities. When implementing the change, ensuring that the lessons learned from it can also be used by other organisations disbursing grants.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality and quality development in early childhood education and care, basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training.

**Measures:**

13. Improving the effectiveness of education, reducing learning differences and fostering equality through large-scale projects aiming to improve quality and equality.

14. In line with Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme, the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched development programmes to improve quality and equality in early childhood education and care and basic education for 2020–2022. The projects of the development programme focus on reforming legislation, improving the effectiveness of funding systems for early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education as well as seek effective practices and operating methods that strengthen equality. A development programme of quality and equality for 2020–2022 has been launched in vocational education and training. Its aim is to guarantee the quality and support the continuous improvement of vocational education and training in line with the effectiveness targets and policies of the VET Quality Strategy. The programme's aims also include narrowing and preventing gaps in learning and learning outcomes linked to gender, socio-economic background, place of residence or need for support, thus promoting equality and non-discrimination in vocational education and training. A programme to develop the quality of general upper secondary education will also be launched in 2021. The foundation for quality management and development will be strengthened by drafting a quality strategy for general upper secondary education in close cooperation with stakeholders, as well as proposals for measures implementing the strategy that will support the development of quality management required in the general upper secondary school legislation. As part of the quality programme for general upper secondary education and vocational education and training, a development project for guidance counselling will be implemented with the aim of systematising the operating methods and practices of guidance at the national level and ensuring that they treat all students equally.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Producing more information on discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

15. Strengthening the system of monitoring discrimination with regard to research evidence on discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Reforming the non-discrimination legislation.

**Measure**

16. As part of the partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act, examining the possibilities of strengthening regulation that promotes the equality of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Combating hate crime and hate speech against persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

17. Carrying out development projects to combat hate crime and hate speech against persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

**Objective:**

Combating multiple discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

18. Developing measures related to multiple discrimination (taking persons with disabilities into account) in the Action programme against racism and for good relations

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

## Raising awareness and building knowledge base: objectives and measures

### **Objectives:**

Building up the knowledge base of the study possibilities available for persons with disabilities in liberal adult education and ensuring the availability of research evidence on this topic in the future. Recognising the rights of persons with disabilities and actively promoting their realisation in liberal adult education institutions.

### **Measure:**

19. Investigating the realisation of equality and non-discrimination in liberal adult education institutions.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

### **Objectives:**

Ensuring that persons with disabilities receive the support they need during the coronavirus crisis and after it to prevent exclusion. Building up the knowledge base of the experiences that persons with disabilities and other special groups have had during the pandemic in order to provide appropriate and adequate support.

### **Measure:**

20. Conducting a survey that includes questions about the experiences of persons with disabilities and other special groups during the coronavirus pandemic and the support needs created by the pandemic in the administrative branches of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

### **Objective:**

Building up a knowledge base related to education and training for persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

21. Examining legislative barriers to building up a knowledge base of disability issues and striving to eliminate them.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness among persons with disabilities of the conclusions, recommendations and general comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Measures:**

22. Translating the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on UNCRPD implementation into Finland's national languages (Finnish and Swedish), and distributing them widely for information.

23. Organising a discussion session for the authorities and disability organisations on the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

24. Encouraging disability organisations to comment on the drafts of general comments produced by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which comprise the Committee's interpretations of the content and application of the Convention's articles.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

## Fostering accessibility: measures and objectives

**Objective:**

Ensuring that the obligations laid down in the UNCRPD are taken into account appropriately when drafting and implementing legislation.

**Measure:**

25. Creating an appropriate legislative framework for identified and future needs for accessibility legislation in connection with the drafting process.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*

26. Assessing the interoperability and coverage of accessibility legislation in the administrative branches of different ministries from the perspective of the obligations of the UNCRPD.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objectives:**

Promoting the equality of persons with disabilities in the ministries' work.

Taking the perspective of equality into account when organising the ministries' events, both the accessibility of information and the accessibility of events.

**Measures:**

27. Providing information on the accessibility of meeting facilities on the Senaattila web service.

28. Providing information on the accessibility of facilities on the ministries' websites and recruitment advertisements.

29. Providing information on the accessibility of facilities at events organised by the ministries. Training staff to provide information on accessibility at events.

30. When organising events, ensuring that attention is paid to accessibility and treatment that is as equal as possible, both on government premises and when organising events in rented facilities.

*Responsible bodies: all ministries*



**Objective:**

In interpretation services, giving the client a wider choice between service providers and supporting the smooth provision of the services.

**31. Measure:**

Making the necessary operative changes and/or amendments to the Act on Interpreting Services, ensuring that procurements according to the Act can be made with a client-friendly approach, appropriately and economically.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Promoting access to digital services, enabling as many persons with disabilities as possible to use websites independently.

**Measures:**

32. Promoting the accessibility of public websites and mobile applications by means of information activities, guidance and advice as well as supervision.

33. Appointing an accessibility representative in each ministry.

34. Including the eOppiva material on accessibility in the ministries' induction programmes.

35. Ensuring that all ministries' websites have an accessibility statement and a possibility of giving feedback.

*Responsible bodies: All ministries*

**Objective:**

Developing an accessible digital identity card.

**Measure:**

36. In cooperation with disability organisations, investigating new methods of implementing digital identification in an accessible manner.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Finance*

**Objectives:**

Promoting design for all and the accessibility of the building stock and living environments through knowledge-based management and development activities.

Supporting the work of building supervision authorities to ensure that they can exert influence through knowledge-based management and by disseminating good practices.

**Measures:**

37. Participating in the organisation of training events on accessibility and the Accessibility Decree through cooperation networks.

38. Highlighting the importance of accessible construction in communication related to the Accessibility Decree, among other things by using the Accessibility Decree guidelines and the Accessible building and environment planning guide.

39. Raising awareness and complementing the knowledge base related to the significance of design for all and accessible construction in new buildings, renovations and as part of systematic property management by sharing information with residents, owners and housing companies as well as property management professionals on the Korjaustieto website, which can be accessed through Ymparisto.fi, the shared website of the environmental administration.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Monitoring the application of the Accessibility Decree.

**Measures:**

40. Monitoring UNCRPD implementation in the enforcement of the Accessibility Decree.

41. Investigating how the exemption in the Accessibility Decree regarding toilet and washing facilities in student and youth accommodation is applied.

42. Organising a regular discussion event on the Accessibility Decree for disability organisations.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Continuing the development work initiated by the Prime Minister's Office, which aims to ensure the accessibility of government premises and services and equal opportunities for participation.

**Measure:**

43. Coordinating the measures aiming to develop accessibility on government premises. Conducting accessibility reviews and surveys (in connection with planning renovations) in cooperation with Senate Properties, and examining and developing accessibility in the government's facilities concept.

*Responsible body: Prime Minister's Office in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Developing the Sign Language Act.

**Measures:**

44. Launching a project to assess the needs to develop the Sign Language Act.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Justice*

## **Ensuring safety and preventing emergency situations: objectives and measures**

**Objective:**

Building a common situational picture of different population groups' needs related to safety and safety skills. Mapping the needs, taking into account equality in different administrative branches' activities.

**Measures:**

45. Taking the rights of persons with disabilities into account in, among other things, the preparation of impact targets in the rescue services' action plan for incident prevention and addressing the special features related to rescuing persons with disabilities in the training and practices of the rescue services. Safety skills are a matter that concerns the entire internal affairs administration. The efforts to raise awareness will go in two directions: building up the safety skills of all population groups and, on the other hand, providing information on the population groups' needs to the authorities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objective:**

Emphasising the needs of persons with disabilities in the rescue services' action plan for incident prevention.

**Measure:**

46. Producing human-centric safety training that meets the needs of different population groups.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objectives:**

Strengthening people's ownership of safety and the safety of living at home.

**Measure:**

47. Strong involvement of the rescue services in the project package titled Living at home safely, the aim of which is to set up a genuinely effective network and concept for improving the safety of homes.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objectives:**

Raising awareness of persons with disabilities as victims of crime.

Also taking the non-discrimination of persons with disabilities into consideration in criminal processes.

**Measures:**

48. Using the Government Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings prepared in 2020 in the stakeholders' activities. Raising awareness of the position of persons with disabilities as potential victims of human trafficking and knowing how to take this into account in the work of different stakeholders, for example in crime prevention. Providing personnel with training related to identifying particularly vulnerable persons as potential victims of crime, encountering them and addressing their special needs, for example in interviews.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

**Objective:**

Using reasonable accommodations in official activities that focus on persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

49. In the context of the Rescue Act reform scheduled for the current government term, examining the implementation of the reasonable accommodation principles in legislation on rescue services to ensure that the human dignity of persons with disabilities is guaranteed in encounters.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Interior*

## **Fostering independent living and inclusion: objectives and measures**

**Objectives:**

Realising the equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society regardless of the nature of the disability, supporting their participation in decision-making related to their lives and securing them services that meet their individual needs.

**Measures:**

50. Overhauling the disability services legislation, ensuring that the obligations of the UNCRPD are taken into account in the new legislation and its implementation. Supporting the implementation of the new legislation by updating the relevant section in the Online Handbook on Disability Services maintained by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare*

**Objective:**

Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the organisation of services that support independent living.

**Measures:**

51. Developing, collecting and disseminating good practices related to organising and procuring housing and services for persons with disabilities.

52. Implementing a pilot project on personal budgeting and preparing a proposal for a Finnish personal budgeting model in disability services.

*Responsible bodies: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Environment, ARA, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Finance*

**Objective:**

Taking the special features of the Sámi culture into account when assessing the needs for assistance and support of Sámi persons with disabilities and when planning services.

**Measure:**

53. Improving the availability of tools for Sámi-language social work focusing on persons with disabilities (including expanding the Sámi-language material in the Online Handbook on Disability Services).

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare*

**Objectives:**

Safeguarding the availability of renovation grants (grants for repairs in the homes of older people and persons with disabilities, grants for removing mobility barriers and retrofitting lifts) and promoting the installation of lifts in the existing housing stock.

**Measures:**

- 54. More effective communication about renovation grants.
- 55. Supporting local working groups planning the retrofitting of lifts and other cooperation.
- 56. Sharing information about the construction of retrofitted lifts, including on the website [hissiin.fi](http://hissiin.fi).

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment and ARA*

**Objective:**

Guiding state-supported housing production for persons with disabilities in an individual and diverse direction.

**Measure:**

- 57. Contributing to ensuring that housing production intended for persons with disabilities facilitates housing in line with the UNCRPD

(a sufficient range of housing options meeting the needs of persons with disabilities is available, especially as part of the standard housing stock).

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment*

**Objective:**

Drawing on the findings of equality studies to improve the housing conditions of persons with disabilities.

**Measure:**

58. Using ARA's renovation grants and investment subsidies to provide housing for persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance*

**Objective:**

Promoting equality in housing for persons with disabilities

**Measure:**

59. In connection with the next property tax reform, preparing a change concerning housing services for persons with disabilities and other population groups, bringing the property tax in line with taxes on permanent residence.

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Finance in cooperation with Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*



## Fostering the right to independent movement and mobility: objectives and measures

### **Objective:**

In the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, striving to intensify the existing supervision of taxis to the extent that it concerns the licence holder's obligation referred to in the Act on Transport Services to ensure that the service provided by the driver is appropriate and that the driver is able to take into account the special needs arising from the passenger's restricted functional capacity.

### **Measure:**

60. As part of supervising compliance with the taxi legislation by the authorities, paying special attention to the licence holder's obligations to ensure the drivers' professional skills related to meeting the special needs of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications*

### **Objective:**

In the administrative branch of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, striving to promote efforts to improve taxi drivers' competence and expertise related to assisting and transporting passengers with disabilities safely, especially in transport services organised or paid for by society, including transport services referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance and services reimbursed by Kela.

### **Measure:**

61. Promoting taxi drivers' competence and expertise related to assisting persons with disabilities safely, especially in transport services organised and paid for by society.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

As far as possible, the Ministry of Transport and Communications together with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of the Environment will investigate the problems that persons with disabilities have encountered when using a disabled parking permits in areas covered by private parking control and the most effective means of tackling these problems.

**Measure:**

62. Striving to investigate problems related to the use of disabled parking permits in private parking areas and ways in which these problems can be tackled

*Responsible bodies: Ministry of Transport and Communications in cooperation with Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Ministry of the Environment.*

## **Fostering equal opportunities for education and training: objectives and measures**

**Objectives:**

Improving education and competence at all levels of education, narrowing learning gaps and increasing equality. Enabling equal opportunities for continuous learning and competence development by comprehensive lifelong guidance services.

**Measures:**

- 63. Implementing the extension of compulsory education.
- 64. Implementing a parliamentary reform of continuous learning.
- 65. Promoting learning support in early childhood education and care by developing a model for learning support.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

By extending compulsory education and providing preparatory education for programmes leading to qualifications, promoting the educational equality of students with disabilities in guidance provided in basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education and training as well as in transitions to education and training leading to qualifications.

**Measures:**

66. Reforming the legislation on education at the transition stage to meet the needs of different students better.

67. Monitoring the impacts of the extension of compulsory education and provision of preparatory education for programmes leading to qualifications on the educational paths of students with disabilities, the effectiveness of the requisite guidance and support measures, and the transition to education and training leading to qualifications and completion of qualifications.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Ensuring that every student completes upper secondary education after basic education.

**Measures:**

68. Enhancing learning support, guidance and student welfare services as well as improving the opportunities of the comprehensive school to provide everyone with sufficient capabilities for completing upper secondary education.

69. Increasing the age of compulsory education to 18. A precondition for extending compulsory education is offering upper secondary education free of charge.

70. Building different forms of studying and support within compulsory education.

As part of extending compulsory education, developing preparatory education programmes for upper secondary education and guidance at the transition point to facilitate the transition to upper secondary education.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessibility, equality and non-discrimination in higher education.

**Measures:**

71. Preparing the accessibility plan for higher education referred to in the Government Programme, which includes a review of how higher education institutions realise equality in terms of social aspects, regions and languages and identifies the obstacles minority groups face when seeking higher education. Preparing a proposal for objectives and policy outlines related to promoting accessibility on the basis of this situation picture.

72. Producing a report on the realisation of equality and non-discrimination in higher education and RDI.

73. Ensuring (by means of performance guidance between the Ministry of Education and Culture and higher education institutions, among other things) that higher education institutions foster equality and non-discrimination in their activities through their statutory equality and non-discrimination plans.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

## Improving access to rehabilitation and health services: objectives and measures

### **Objective:**

Ensuring that clients receive appropriate and timely health care and rehabilitation.

### **Measures:**

74. Addressing client-centredness, needs assessment and timeliness in the context of the Social welfare and health centre of the future programme and other reforms, such as the Work ability programme, the Mental health strategy and the Age programme. While these programmes concern the entire population, they also influence the availability of services for persons with disabilities.

75. Developing multi-professional social and health centres that rely on digitalisation as well as the work inputs of different professionals and specialist level consultations.

76. Improving leadership in social welfare and health care services and personnel competence development, and supporting well-being at work in the social welfare and health care sector.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

### **Objective:**

Improving the functional capacity of persons with disabilities.

### **Measures:**

77. Developing rehabilitation on the basis of the rehabilitation committee's proposals for 2020–2023, taking into account the rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities.

78. Ensuring that the criteria for the delivery of medical rehabilitation aids are up to date.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

## Fostering equal employment and access to work: objectives and measures

### **Objective:**

Launching the development of digital employment services.

### **Measures:**

79. As part of more extensive efforts to develop the assessment of service needs, launching the development of a digital tool for identifying needs for services in support of work ability. As part of this measure, integrating the Työelämään.fi web service more closely into the Job Market ecosystem of the TE services.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

### **Objective:**

Improving the targeting of TE services.

### **Measures:**

80. Drawing on the special expertise of disability organisations to update the service design of TE services. Integrating support elements needed to lower the recruitment threshold into the services.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment*

### **Objective:**

Promoting work performed in an employment relationship by developing the intermediate labour market.

### **Measures:**

81. Creating a systematic and goal-oriented intermediate labour market actor in Finland drawing on experiences gained of the Swedish company Samhall and the results of the work bank experiment as examples. The idea is to improve the possibilities of persons with partial work ability and others in a vulnerable situation to enter

the open labour market by offering them subsidised jobs as well as the training and other support they need for the transition to the open labour market. The objectives also include providing a job of a sufficiently long duration for those who cannot find employment in the open labour market. Launching a study which will define the content of the Finnish model and the organisation, funding forms and other implementation arrangements of the activities. The goal is to launch the activities no later than in 2022.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.*

**Objective:**

Promoting work performed in an employment relationship in the open labour market.

**Measure:**

82. In a project carried out with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, promoting the use of an employment clause in public procurement. Deploying the operating model developed in various ESF projects. Regional coordinators will be used in this project to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment*

## **Fostering an adequate standard of living and social protection: measures and objectives**

**Objective:**

Addressing the rights of persons with disabilities in the reform of the Client Charges Act, including the coordination of the Client Charges Act and the Act on Disability Services and Assistance to be revised.

**Measure:**

83. Improving the efficiency of legislation on reducing and waving client charges.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

**Objective:**

Improving the income security of persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

84. Implementing a linear model that will facilitate the combination of social security and employment.

85. Paying attention to the income development of persons with disabilities as part of the social security system overhaul.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*

## **Fostering participation in cultural, recreational and leisure activities and sport: objectives and measures**

**Objective:**

Promoting the possibilities of persons with disabilities to participate in art and cultural activities.

**Measures:**

86. Supporting the art and cultural activities of national disability organisations and communities, including Theatre Totti (formerly the Theatre for the Deaf) and projects and activities that improve the accessibility of art and culture.

87. Including the promotion of accessibility and non-discrimination in the criteria for grants as a separate heading in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*



**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the accessibility of cultural activities.

**Measure:**

88. Among national actors, especially the Culture for All service offers information and support for cultural actors in issues related to accessibility and diversity.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessible library services.

**Measure:**

89. The performance targets of the National Center for Accessible Literature and Publishing in Finland for the period 2020–2023 include developing online services, promoting accessible publication and reading, improving the availability of services, developing products and services for children and young people, and complementing accessible publication activities with Celia's offer of books.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with Celia*

**Objective:**

Promoting the mainstreaming of physical activities for persons with disabilities.

**Measures:**

90. An obligation to prepare equality and non-discrimination plans in which the participation of persons with disabilities in physical activity is one of the key measures has been added as an eligibility criterion for general grants for sports organisations. Training (clinics) on these plans has been provided for grant recipients.

91. Taking physical activity for persons with disabilities into account in development grants for club activities and a physically active lifestyle.

92. Highlighting equality as a targeted eligibility criterion for grants in the calls for proposals relating to discretionary government transfers for the Schools on the Move programme and measures for integrating physical activity into the school day organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Grants have also been targeted at projects that specifically develop the opportunities of those in need of special support for physical activity during the school day.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting accessibility in the construction of sports facilities.

**Measures:**

93. Updating the policy document on the construction of sports facilities.

94. Accessibility is an eligibility condition for central government grants intended for the construction of sports facilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Promoting the equal opportunities of persons with disabilities to use youth work services and participate in youth activities.

**Measures:**

95. In keeping with the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme, the Discrimination-free Zone campaign will be stepped up in the youth sector in 2022–2023. The campaign consists of targeted communication, materials and training events for actors in the field.

96. In line with the VANUPO programme, examining the equality plans required in the Youth Act and their objectives and measures related to preventing discrimination. Implementing additional and enhancing measures on the basis of observations made.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Education and Culture*

**Objective:**

Improving the accessibility of television services in connection with the amendments to the Act on the Provision of Digital Services.

**Measure:**

97. Gradually expanding the accessibility of media services, for example by bringing on-demand streaming services within the scope of the accessibility obligations as well as increasing the obligations related to reporting and planning and those associated with the quality of captions.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Transport and Communications*

## **Fostering the rights of persons with disabilities in international cooperation: objectives and measures**

**Objective:**

Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in international cooperation.

**Measure:**

98. Actively highlighting the rights of persons with disabilities in the work of the EU, UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and, if possible, other international organisations as well as different global political processes and negotiations.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming these rights in development cooperation.

**Measures:**

99. Guidelines and tools for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities have been completed and are in active use.

100. In the human rights and humanitarian training organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account, and these rights will be integrated better into training on cross-sectional objectives and the implementation of a human rights-based approach, among other things.

101. Continuing to support activities of non-governmental organisations, emphasising a human rights-based approach and taking cross-sectional objectives into account.

102. Continuing to develop guidelines and tools that promote the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in all forms of development cooperation.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Supporting projects that promote the rights of persons with disabilities politically and, as far as possible, financially.

**Measure:**

103. Continuing to provide political and, if possible, also financial support for UN activities in support of the rights of persons with disabilities.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Strengthening the rights of girls and women with disabilities in international cooperation.

**Measures:**

104. As Finland chairs UN Women in 2020, promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities is a key priority.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Promoting the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities through international advocacy.

**Measure:**

105. Continuing advocacy within UN organisations and the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Finland's priorities include implementing the UNDIS and the IASC guidelines, improving the status of women and girls with disabilities, appointing disability representatives in organisations, funding disability rights activities (both specific measures and mainstreaming) and building know-how.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Taking the rights of persons with disabilities into account in humanitarian crises.

**Measures:**

106. In 2020–2023, Finland will continue to emphasise disability activities during humanitarian crises, including such pandemics as COVID-19. Finland supports financially the humanitarian aid work of UN organisations and Finnish NGOs and engages in active dialogue with them about mainstreaming the disability perspective.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness among persons with disabilities and disability organisations of and promoting their participation in international cooperation and the review of the UNCRPD periodic report.

**Measures:**

107. Disseminating information about the review of Finland's first periodic report on the implementation of the UNCRPD prior to its consideration by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities, including about disability organisations' possibility to submit written opinions ('parallel reports') to the Committee and to attend a closed hearing of the Committee.

108. Organising a possibility of watching the consideration of Finland's first report in Helsinki as a live broadcast on the UN WebTV.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities in development policy.

**Measure:**

109. Reporting on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities as part of the development policy results report.

*Responsible body: Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

**Objective:**

Raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities belonging to indigenous peoples in the Nordic countries.

**Measure:**

110. Focusing on the rights of Sámi persons with disabilities as the theme of Finland's chairmanship of the Council of Nordic Cooperation on Disability in 2021. Organising a Nordic seminar on this theme in Inari in August 2021.

*Responsible body: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and VANE.*



The National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities determines the measures that will be taken to promote the implementation of the Convention in different administrative branches during the second action plan period 2020-2023.

The Action Plan consists of 13 content areas and 110 measures based on the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Safety has been added to the content areas of the Action Plan for this action plan period.

The Action Plan emphasises the importance of social inclusion of persons with disabilities in the changing operating environment and the importance of accessibility as a precondition for implementing the other rights. Independent living, education and employment, among other things, are strong content areas of the Action Plan. One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to increase awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to mainstream these rights in different administrative branches and more widely in society.